

# Grace Harlowe's Overland Riders in the Yellowstone National Park



Grace Harlowe's  
Overland Riders Series

Jessie Graham Flower, A.M.

A. Dean and Jean M. Larsen  
Yellowstone Park Collection



PZ 7 .F669 Giy 1923

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"Get Back, Ye Houn'!"

*Frontispiece.*

**Grace Harlowe's Overland Riders  
in the Yellowstone National Park**

**by**

**Jessie Graham Flower, A. M.**

***Illustrated***

**THE SAALFIELD PUBLISHING COMPANY**  
**Akron, Ohio** **New York**

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# GRACE HARLOWE'S OVERLAND RIDERS IN THE YELLOW- STONE NATIONAL PARK

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## CHAPTER I

### OVERLANDERS GET A SHOCK

“**H**ERE we are again,” cried Lieutenant Hippy Wingate. “Cinnabar! All out for Cinnabar, the gateway to the great Yellowstone National Park. Get busy, you Overlanders, or you’ll be left.”

“Cinnabar! It sounds like something good to eat,” declared Stacy Brown. “The town doesn’t look as if it could furnish much food worth while,” he added, peering from the car window as he munched an apple.

“Perhaps not for an appetite such as yours,” retorted Emma Dean. “Why don’t you try absent treatment? Just imagine that you have had a most satisfying meal, and in a few moments you will forget all about your hunger.”

"We had to do that many times in France, did we not?" laughed Grace Harlowe, turning to her companion, Elfreda Briggs.

"Not 'many times,' but most of the time," agreed Elfreda. "*Alors! Let's go!*"

Gathering up their belongings, the Overland Riders moved towards the exit of their Pullman car just as the North Coast Limited roared up to the station at Cinnabar, the point at which thousands of tourists stop off during the summer season to visit the Yellowstone National Park, now the destination of the Overlanders themselves. A throng of tourists stepped down from the train to the long low platform in front of the little station.

Among the first to leave the train were the Overland Riders — Grace Harlowe Gray and her husband, Tom Gray, in the lead. A few moments later the train was rumbling away, enveloped in a black cloud of smoke.

Four-in-hand Concord coaches, old-fashioned but in good repair, to which handsome black horses were hitched, were drawn up to the platform to carry away the tourists. There was bustle and laughter and shouting and excitement among the tourists, in which the khaki-clad Overland Riders took no part, for they were experienced travelers now just starting out on their regular summer outing in the saddle. The

Overlanders, however, were interested in the busy scene at the little station. The quaint little town with its wooden buildings built in irregular formation, like many other far western towns, sat in a vast amphitheater formed by surrounding mountain ranges.

"Come, girls," urged Grace Harlowe. "We must busy ourselves, for we have much to do. Tom, please inquire if our guide, Jake Coville, is here."

"What concerns me most at the moment is where we are to eat," spoke up Nora Wingate.

"I was about to ask the same question," nodded Stacy Brown, more familiarly known to his companions as "Chunky," whose appetite had never been known to be fully appeased.

"There is a hotel sign just across the way," volunteered Miss Briggs.

"It takes more than a sign to make a hotel," observed Grace laughingly. "That is especially true in this far western country, as we Riders have had ample evidence."

"Let's go! No food is worse than poor food," urged Stacy.

"Yes. Let's do," agreed Emma.

"No breakfast until we have unloaded and fed the ponies," called Hippy Wingate. "The animals need more attention than we do. Come along."

"They don't need it so much as this animal does," declared Chunky.

"Feed the ponies; then we will think of food for ourselves," was Hippy's reply. "Tom, what about the guide?"

"I'll find out." Stepping over to the station agent, who was busy with a pile of trunks that had been unloaded from the Limited, Tom asked: "Do you know where we may find Jake Coville?"

The agent, before replying, surveyed Tom from head to foot.

"I reckon you'll find him at home."

"Where is that, please?"

"Next to the last house down the street, after you have turned to your left, first turn."

"It is strange that he is not here to meet us," observed Tom, turning away.

"Perhaps he is one of the independent kind that has to be asked," suggested Nora.

"So are we," interjected Stacy.

"Why doesn't some one go fetch him?" demanded Emma.

"Tom will do so after we get the ponies out," answered Grace.

"No, you folks take care of the ponies and leave Mr. Coville to me," urged Stacy. "I know how to handle these wild westerners."

"After we have taken the animals out," nodded Tom.



The party hurried down the platform to the stock car that the station agent pointed out to them, and that had been shunted over on the siding by an earlier train. In the freight house end of the station they found a plank gangway intended for use in unloading stock. The runway was not more than three feet wide, but this did not worry the Overlanders. Their ponies were used to traveling over narrow places and would walk over the narrow bridge as confidently as would the Overlanders themselves.

While Tom, Hippy and Stacy were dragging the heavy planking over to the stock car a crowd of curious villagers gathered to witness the unloading of the ponies.

"Troopers?" questioned a native.

"Not exactly," answered Tom Gray.

"Thought mebbby you was a new cavalry company come to do patrol work in the Park. Heard there was a gang coming. Most of the regulars that was on duty in the Park went to France, and some of 'em ain't come back."

"Say, do we look like a gang?" demanded Stacy Brown, turning on the speaker.

"Wall, I reckon you might."

"Then again we might not," retorted the fat boy.

"Come, Stacy! You aren't lifting a pound," rebuked Lieutenant Wingate.



"He never has," reminded Emma Dean.

"And never will if he can get out of it," laughed Elfreda Briggs.

"Mebby he's got all he kin do to lug himself around," suggested one of the villagers.

Stacy eyed him narrowly.

"That never will bother you because your head is too light to overbalance you," retorted the fat boy.

"Can you and Tom lift the gangway up?" called Hippy, clinging to the closed car door.

"We can, but we won't," answered Stacy.

"Huh! I suppose I shall have to get down and help you," grunted Lieutenant Wingate.

"You will if you wish to use the gangway to-day," retorted Stacy. "Don't you reckon I'd better go look for Jake Coville?"

"Yes, yes, go on," begged Tom Gray disgustedly.

"All right, I'll go. Say, it's a pity some of you lazy village folks wouldn't turn to and give us a hand. Never saw such an indifferent lot in my life."

"Why should they, Stacy? They do not belong to our party," answered Nora Wingate.

"Oh, there isn't any reason, of course," grumbled the fat boy.

"Did you ever help anyone out?" questioned Emma.

"Oh, lots of times. I have been doing that all my life," answered Stacy, sauntering away to go in search of the guide who had failed to meet them.

The girls offered to help put the gangway in place, but the two men would not permit them to do so. At this juncture the agent came out and offered his services, and a moment later the gangway was in place. The station agent then opened the car door.

"There. Now you can get your stock out," he said.

Hippy took one amazed look at the interior of the car and uttered an exclamation.

"Here, here! What's this?" he cried.

The Overlanders ran up the gangway and peered in.

"For mercy's sake!" cried Nora Wingate. "Those are not our ponies."

The car, instead of holding the slim-limbed, sleek ponies of the Overland outfit, was filled with huge draft horses, such as one sees exhibited at county fairs in the east.

"Mr. Agent, they have dropped the wrong car here. These are not our animals," declared Hippy.

"I can't help that," replied the agent.

"Young man, you march right back to your office and send out a general alarm for one car of ponies missing, and tell your superiors that we

shall hold them responsible for the delivery of our animals before night to-day," warned Hippy. "Get busy."

The agent said he could do nothing, but Hippy was of a different opinion, and led the agent to the telegraph office where the Overlander sent a peremptory message to the general superintendent.

This done the Overland Riders began looking about for a place to eat and to spend the day and night. They finally found quarters at a hotel, but, after looking the place over, they decided to go into camp. Fortunately, all their equipment had been shipped as baggage, so, hiring a man and a wagon, they had the equipment drawn to the edge of the little town where they pitched their tents and began preparing camp, not knowing how long it might be before they got their ponies.

Many of the villagers followed the party out and observed the process of camp-making with keen interest.

"Government party?" questioned the postmaster.

"No," answered Lieutenant Wingate shortly.

"We are out for a pleasure trip through the Park," Grace informed him.

"Oh! Been out before, haven't you?"

"Yes, sir. A great many times. There comes

Stacy. He looks disturbed about something," said Grace.

"That is because he thinks he has missed his breakfast," chuckled Emma Dean.

"What's the matter, Stacy?" called Nora. "We thought you were lost."

"I was. Nobody seemed to know where you folks had gone. I've had an awful experience, worst I ever had in my life, and —"

"Did you find Coville?" interrupted Tom Gray as he drove home a tent peg.

"Find him? I should say I did. Most distressing thing you ever heard of. I know I shall never get over the shock that I got this day."

Stacy plainly was laboring under a severe nerve strain, as his companions discerned, and therefore no one attempted to tease him.

"Tell us about it," urged Grace gently.

"What's the matter now?" demanded Hippy Wingate, returning from the station. "Didn't you find Coville?"

"Yes, I found him." Stacy mopped the perspiration from his face with a sleeve.

"Then why is he not here attending to his business?" demanded Hippy with some irritation.

"I'll tell you the story, then you'll understand," answered Stacy soberly. "I found the place where Coville lived and I was met at the door by a red-eyed woman who looked as if she had



been crying. I asked her if Jake was there and she said 'yes' and burst into tears. Well, would you believe me, folks —"

"Oh, we will believe anything after this horse-car mystery," returned Hippy Wingate impatiently.

"I told her who I was and that Jake was to be our guide, and, what do you think —"

"Don't stall. Get to the point," urged Tom.

"She said, 'He ain't nobody's guide now. Jake's dead!'"

The Overland Riders gasped.

"Who — what —" exclaimed Nora.

"Uh-huh. He passed out suddenly."

"Oh, that is too bad," cried the girls, their voices full of sympathy.

"We hadn't even heard that he was ill," added Elfreda.

"He wasn't — that is, not until yesterday when he got kicked in the head by a horse, and that was the last of him. But never so long as I live will I get over the shock," muttered Stacy. "Don't talk to me. I guess I want to get away by myself and think," added Stacy, sobered, deeply affected for the first time in his life.

"We must do something for the family, provided they need it," suggested Grace. "Any news from our missing horses, Hippy?"

"Not a word. The railroad officials profess to



know nothing about them and insist that the car we have is the car that went out with us when we left Denver."

"Oh, I hope we do not lose our wonderful ponies," cried Elfreda.

"There's no possibility of that," replied Lieutenant Wingate, "We may be delayed here for a few days waiting for the railroad people to straighten out the tangle, so let's make the best of a bad situation and enjoy ourselves."

As later events proved, Hippy Wingate was not a true prophet, for the Overlanders were face to face with a mystery that would not be solved in many a day. Their summer's outing had begun under the most unfavorable conditions of any summer journey they had ever undertaken.

## CHAPTER II

## THE WIRES BRING BAD NEWS

“THE question is, what shall we do for a guide?” said Miss Briggs later in the afternoon, after they had finished the noon meal in their own camp.

“Unless we find our ponies we shall have no need of a guide,” answered Grace. “Ponies are what we are most in need of at this stage of our journey.”

“We can walk, can’t we?” spoke up Nora Wingate.

A chorus of “no’s” greeted her suggestion.

“Why don’t you give the subject some ‘absent treatment,’ Emma?” suggested Stacy Brown.

“I—I never tried it on a horse, and don’t know whether or not it will work,” stammered Miss Dean amid laughter. “I’ll try it, if you wish. As a matter of fact, my instructor in mental treatment says that one can accomplish anything if one only has faith in his ability to do so.”

“Stacy, do you hear that?” laughed Grace, smiling at the blinking fat boy. “It might do

wonders for your appetite. Would you like to have Emma try her new fad on you?"

"Not on me," protested Chunky with emphasis. "Let her try it on the horses. What's the news, Uncle Hip?" he added, as Lieutenant Wingate sauntered into camp.

"None at all. The agent and the officials still insist that it is our car and our shipment of horses that lies on the siding over yonder. I have come back to you folks for a conference. What would you advise doing in the matter?"

"I, for one, advise remaining right where we are until we get our ponies, even if it takes all summer," suggested Emma, but no one gave the slightest heed to her advice.

"Hippy, have you seen the waybill?" inquired Grace, who had been regarding Lieutenant Wingate thoughtfully.

"The waybill?" exclaimed Hippy.

"That carload of draft horses must weigh about a million pounds," declared Stacy.

"I don't mean 'weigh,' I mean 'way,'" laughed Grace.

"That's right, Hippy. Odd it hadn't occurred to me," nodded Tom.

"The waybill is the shipping orders for the railroad by which conductors of trains are informed where the cars of their train are to be dropped off," Grace informed her companions. "This waybill

bears the number of the car and names its contents and destination. It might not be a bad idea to see what the waybill says. I don't suppose the agent has examined it. If it is our car the mystery is too deep for me to solve."

"Say, Brown Eyes, you have a wonderful head," complimented Lieutenant Wingate.

"Remarkable mentality," agreed Stacy under his breath, giving Tom Gray a sidelong glance, but Tom merely laughed good-naturedly.

Hippy said he would see the agent at once, and started at a brisk walk for the railway station. He returned an hour later.

"Well?" called Tom, when Lieutenant Wingate was still some distance away.

"The car on the siding is not our car at all. Our waybill calls not only for a car from another road, but for a car with a wholly different number. That was a big suggestion, Grace," added Hippy, smiling at her.

"What did you do about it?" inquired Elfreda Briggs.

"Do? I expressed my sentiments in a message to the superintendent that made the wires sing. I'll get action or I'll —"

"Get into jail," finished Emma amid laughter.

"Well, not this trip," responded Lieutenant Wingate dryly. "I just came over to tell you. I'm going back now to see what the Super has to



say in reply. I'll let you know as soon as something develops. 'Bye! "

By the time Hippy reached the station the agent had received orders regarding the car of draft horses but no information regarding the ponies, so Lieutenant Wingate sent another message, more forceful than he had sent before. Still no reply. Hippy sent still another one; and he continued to send messages to various railroad officials, messages that had a punch in them.

In the meantime Grace and Tom had walked into the village, first to the post office, then to the hotel, to inquire if there were a place nearby where they might procure horses for their journey, and to make further inquiries about a guide, provided they should need one. Their quest amounted to this: There was a stock farm about ten miles from Cinnabar where horses might possibly be obtained, but neither the hotel proprietor nor the postmaster knew where they could find a guide, as, at this, the busiest period of the tourist traffic, guides were in great demand.

"When you get into the Park you no doubt will be able to pick up someone who knows the Park. If not, why not take a Concord coach or a car and do the Park the way other tourists do?" the hotel proprietor suggested.

"Because we prefer to ride our horses through," answered Tom briefly. "Come, Grace! "

They returned to camp, first having made some food purchases, and shortly after their arrival Hippy came in, but he still had no news for them, and that night the Overland Riders turned in rather glum, for their misfortune at the very beginning of the season's outing disturbed them considerably. Then again, the ponies belonging to their outfit were trained animals and represented quite a heavy investment; but, like the good travelers they were, the Overland Riders tried to make the best of their troubles, hoping that the morrow might bring them better luck.

The morning, however, failed to bring anything in the way of news, and once more Lieutenant Wingate began bombarding officials with telegrams. This continued for three days following; then, one morning, the camp was awakened by a loud halloo, which brought all hands to instant wakefulness. Hippy ran out from his tent in his pajamas.

"Telegram for Theophilus Wingate," announced the boy who had brought the message.

The Overlanders, peering from their tents, saw Hippy tear the envelope open, then, after a brief perusal of the contents, begin to dance about with as fine a display of temper as his companions had ever seen him exhibit.

"Uncle Hip's got the willies," observed Stacy Brown. "I hope he doesn't give them to me."

"Hey, there! What is it all about?" demanded Tom Gray, emerging from his tent.

"Yes, let us have the news. Don't keep us in suspense any longer," called Grace.

"News? News?" roared Hippy. "Of all the blithering idiots — of all the fool blundering that mortal man ever heard of, this is the end of the limit. What do you think?"

"Nothing!" shouted Stacy.

"It is too early in the morning for Chunky to think," piped Emma. "You should know by this time that his mental processes never do function before breakfast, and then merely nominally."

"Why don't you give me the absent treatment?" suggested Stacy.

"As I began to remark, what do you folks think?" resumed Hippy. "Listen to the message from the division superintendent of the outfit that calls itself a railroad." Hippy then read the following message to his companions:

" 'T. H. Wingate:

" 'Regret to report that car 16,431, billed Cinabar, with horses for the Overland Riders, was by mistake shifted to siding at Summit Junction early morning of the fourteenth and by mistake of train crew left there when taking on car of work horses for the west. Regret also to report that, upon examining the car supposed to contain Overland Riders' mounts, it was found to be empty.

Making investigation and will report developments.' ”

“Empty! ” howled Stacy Brown.

“Our ponies gone! ” cried Emma.

The Overland Riders uttered long-drawn groans; that is, all did except Hippy Wingate. Hippy, barefooted, was chasing the telegraph messenger out of camp, and shouting his opinion of railroads and railroad officials.

### CHAPTER III

#### ON THE ROAD TO WONDERLAND

“**I** REMEMBER that stop, Summit Junction,” cried Miss Briggs. “We stayed there so long that I peeked out of the window wondering if it was another hold-up, but there was nothing to see.”

“What could have happened to the poor little animals? ” wondered Nora Wingate.

“Happened! ” roared Hippy Wingate, limping back to camp with a stone bruise on each foot. “Somebody stole the whole outfit, that’s what happened. Dear friends, make up your minds to kiss your ponies good-bye. The chances are that



you never will see them again," he added, nodding at Miss Dean.

"Thank you. I do not kiss horses, but I wish I could get near enough to mine to do so if I wished," replied Emma.

"The question is, what are we to do now?" reminded Grace.

"This being my party I will furnish new mounts if I can find them," announced Hippy. "I'll tell you what. Tom, you and Stacy go with me and we will get a 'rig' and drive out to the stock farm that you and Grace found out about. If we can get animals there that are worth while I'll buy them and we should be ready to start for the Park early to-morrow morning. All agreed?"

"Yes!" cried the girls.

"While we are absent, find out all you can about the route to the Park, you stay-at-homes," directed Tom.

Tom Gray started a fire, and by the time the men had finished dressing, the girls were busily engaged getting breakfast.

Breakfast was a hurried affair, for Tom and Hippy were eager to be off in order that they might settle the question of mounts before the day came to an end. An hour later, with Stacy Brown riding on behind, the three started away in a buckboard for their drive into the country.

After breakfast, Grace and Elfreda went into

town to make inquiries as to their proposed journey. From a Park guard, whom they found at the post office, the two girls learned that a government road led from Cinnabar directly into the Park. He said that there was no possibility of the party losing their way, and gave them information about what they should do after reaching the Park.

Before leaving the post office Grace and Elfreda had a picture of the route well in mind. The Park guard also informed them that they would have no difficulty in picking up a guide once they reached the Park itself.

"This seems to clear up every problem except the question of mounts," announced Grace. "I presume it would be wise to order provisions, to be paid for and taken if our men folk succeed in getting ponies for us."

After making provisional purchases they returned to camp, and there the girls spent the rest of the day waiting rather impatiently for the return of the horse-hunters, but it was not until supper time that the three men returned. With them they brought a string of western ponies and two pack horses. The animals were not sleek like their own mounts, but Tom and Hippy assured the girls that the animals were guaranteed, and that, while they were not all that could be desired, still they were a find.

"Pick your horses," directed Lieutenant Wingate. "But don't all choose the same horse. If you do you will have to draw lots to settle the difficulty."

"I have a better plan," spoke up Miss Briggs. "Number the animals, write the numbers on slips of paper and place the papers in a hat; then we will each draw a slip."

"Good idea," nodded Stacy Brown. "We don't want any hair pulling in this outfit."

"Stacy!" rebuked Nora. "I am amazed at you."

"You shouldn't be," interjected Emma.

The drawing took place at once, and for a wonder each girl got the pony that pleased her. After supper the purchases made by Grace and Elfreda were brought over to camp and packs were made up for an early start. The Overland party were on their way shortly after sunrise on the following morning. The ponies behaved well and the party was as well satisfied with them as could be expected in the circumstances, and happy to be once more in the saddle, and especially to be "on their own," as Miss Briggs expressed it, meaning that they were to be their own guides.

The ponies started at a brisk trot down the dusty road, a pace that the pack animals stood up under very well, considering that they were carrying heavy loads. As they progressed the Over-

landers found themselves enveloped in a great cloud of suffocating dust that brought many coughs and sneezes.

"Gracious!" exclaimed Elfreda between coughs. "I never in all my life swallowed so much dust as I have this morning."

"And it isn't what might be called 'pay dust,' either," chuckled Lieutenant Wingate.

"Hear! Hear!" cried Emma. "Hippy has made a joke."

"He only thinks he has," chortled Stacy. "Why, I could make a better joke than that with my hands tied behind me."

"And a gag between your teeth," flung back Hippy, who was riding ahead.

"You have expressed my sentiments exactly," laughed Tom Gray.

"You have offered us an excellent suggestion," piped Emma, then fell into a severe fit of coughing. "What is needed here is a sprinkling wagon," she added chokingly.

"Yes. You have said it," agreed Nora.

The road was now winding into a thick forest of slender scrubby pine. The little trees, tall and straight, stood so close together that a horse could hardly have been forced between them, and their foliage had been turned to a dirty yellow by the dust from the government road that had settled over it. The Overlanders, however, de-



spite these unpleasant features, were in good spirits, each one eagerly looking forward to their journey through Nature's Wonderland, which they were now entering.

The Riders swept into Gardiner Canyon at a slow jog, finding instant relief from the dust, the road and river there winding between high cliffs, the outer gateway to the Park itself.

A brief halt was made for luncheon, and late in the afternoon they came out upon a spacious plateau where they decided to pitch their camp for the night. According to the map of the Park that Tom had brought with him they were now but a short distance from the Mammoth Hot Springs.

Camp was quickly made and a fire started, and the warmth of the fire, and the hot dinner that was soon served, brought comfort and loosened the tongues of the Overland Riders.

"Ahem!" began Hippy, as they finished the meal.

"Uncle Hip is going to make a speech," groaned Stacy Brown.

"Unhappy moment," murmured Emma.

"Ladies and gentlemen, do you know where you are?" he began oratorically.

"In the Yellowstone National Park," shouted Stacy, amid laughter.

"Or nearly so," corrected the speaker. "Being

here, it is well that you should acquaint yourselves with the extent of the vast natural reserves upon which we are about to enter."

"Make it short and snappy," urged J. Elfreda Briggs laughingly.

"It was in the year 1872 that the Congress of the United States passed an act which set aside forever as a public park that section of the country now known as the Yellowstone National Park. This great park is rectangular in shape, sixty-two miles long from north to south, by fifty-four miles wide."

"Our city park at Chillicothe can beat that," interjected Stacy.

"The Park has an area of 3,412 square miles," continued Lieutenant Wingate. "It has many lakes, nearly two hundred miles of improved roads, and a chain of hotels. The Park is patrolled by United States cavalry. The name of the Park is supposed to have been taken from the Indian name of the river, Mi-tsi-a-da-zi, meaning, 'Rock Yellow River.'"

"Ha, ha!" laughed the fat boy. "That sounds as if it had been named by a baby."

"Please do not interrupt the gentleman," begged Emma gravely.

"The Park is located in northwestern Wyoming, with a narrow strip in Montana and Idaho. It is open from June to September, I understand."

"I believe there is much game in the Park," suggested Nora. "Do you know anything about that?"

"Oh, yes. My information on this vast Park is, I might say, wide. Buffalo, elk and deer, with many bear, some antelopes, a few coyotes and much small game, are to be found here," Hippy informed them.

"Hooray! We'll have a bear hunt," shouted Stacy.

"Not here, you won't," answered Tom Gray severely.

"Why won't we?" demanded the fat boy.

"This is a government preserve, young man, and hunting is forbidden here," replied Tom.

"Tom is right, Stacy, and you will please not forget that your Uncle Sam is not to be trifled with. Follow the crowd and sit on your safety valve until we get clear of the Park," advised Lieutenant Wingate.

"Pshaw!" grunted the fat boy. "Somebody is always taking the joy out of life. When do we see the geezers?"

"The what?" exclaimed the Overlanders in chorus.

"The geezers? The things that squirt up into the air?"

"Geezers! Geezers!" groaned Emma Dean. "This is too much."

"You mean geysers, don't you?" asked Grace after the laughter had subsided.

"Yes. Something of that sort. Is that what they call them?"

"Certainly, Stacy. Geysers," nodded Grace.

"I thought it was geezers."

"Your early education has been sadly neglected, I fear," averred Tom Gray dryly.

"When I was a boy they didn't have geysers. They were geezers," muttered Stacy.

"But they had spouters then as now," chuckled Emma. "I —"

"Hark!" warned Grace, holding up a hand for silence. "I hear a horse coming at a gallop."

"Perhaps it is one of the troopers coming to see who and what we are," suggested Tom.

All heard the hoof beats from the direction of Cinnabar; then they saw a rider come around the bend just beyond and slow down as he espied the camp. Halting when he reached the camp, the stranger touched his sombrero and bade the Overlanders a pleasant good-evening.

"Howdy, stranger," greeted Hippy, walking out to the newcomer. "Get off and have a snack, won't you? We have just finished our chow, but there is enough left for you, I reckon."

"Thankee. I had my supper at Cinnabar. Name's Jim Badger. I'm one of them guide fellers. Want a guide?"



"Get down and we will talk it over," invited Hippy, and beckoned to his companions who strolled over and were introduced by Lieutenant Wingate. "This man says he is a guide and offers his services. What do you think about it, folks?"

"Do you know the Park well?" questioned Tom.

"I reckon nobody knows it better."

"How did you know that we were without a guide?" asked Grace.

"The folks back in Cinnabar told me when I rode in there this afternoon, so I jest hustled down here to catch up with you."

"What will you charge to guide us through the Park?" asked Hippy.

"All I can git."

"What you get out of this outfit won't make you round-shouldered to carry," Stacy informed the applicant.

"We ordinarily pay about twenty-five dollars a week," said Tom.

"How long you folks goin' to be here?"

"Perhaps a month," replied Tom. "We wish to do the Park thoroughly."

"I'll take the job."

"Not so fast, old man. We haven't asked you to do so yet. In fact, we had rather decided not to take on a guide, and that we would go it alone," Lieutenant Wingate made reply.

"You hired Jake Coville, didn't you?"

"What do you say, folks?" questioned Lieutenant Wingate, ignoring Badger's remark, and turning to the Overlanders.

"I think we will leave the decision to you and Tom," answered Grace, glancing at her companions who nodded their assent.

"What do you say, Tom?"

"I agree, Hippy."

"We will take you, Badger — take you on a week's trial, if that suits you," announced Hippy.

"I reckon it'll have to. Where you goin'?"

"You are the guide. That is for you to suggest," spoke up Captain Gray.

"The usual, I suppose," nodded Badger.

"No. Not the usual," interjected Grace. "We wish to see what the ordinary tourist doesn't see."

The new guide wrinkled his forehead in thought.

"How does the Mammoth Springs in the morning strike you folks, then the geysers, and so on through?"

Tom Gray said that was in accordance with the plans already in mind.

"Got permits for the Park?" asked the guide.

"Not yet," replied Hippy.

"Then you got to go to the office in the mornin' and git them. You all have to register, you know."

They did not know of this regulation for

campers, though supposing that some sort of requirements were demanded of outfits such as theirs.

The party now sat down by the fire to discuss the Park and the features that they wished to see. Badger sat hunched down before the blaze, furtively studying his new charges. This, of course, he had a right to do, and perhaps it was proper that he should. He, in turn, was closely observed by the Overlanders themselves. Badger was a slight, wiry fellow, keen-eyed and observant, as the Overlanders soon discovered, and somehow the girls of the party were not thoroughly at their ease under his observation. They were therefore somewhat relieved when Hippy took the guide out to show him their equipment and give Badger a line on their way of doing things. The guide quickly discovered that the Overland Riders were fully as well informed on camp life in the woods or mountains as he himself was. Still, there were some features about these seasoned young people that he had yet to learn.

The party chatted until late in the evening, then turned in with the moon shining down on their little tents, happy to be once more close to nature, and anticipating a peaceful night's sleep in the open. A rude awakening awaited them, however, and, as usual, Stacy Brown was to be the moving cause of the disturbance.

## CHAPTER IV

## UNBIDDEN GUESTS IN CAMP

“**W**HAT do you think of Badger?” asked Grace as she and Elfreda were preparing for bed.

“He is an odd fellow, but I reckon all guides are more or less peculiar. So are we for that matter.”

Grace admitted the truth of the statement.

“Will you folks please keep quiet in there? Don’t you think I want to go to sleep?” demanded Stacy from an adjoining tent.

“It will take more than talking to cause you to lose sleep,” piped the voice of Emma Dean.

“Don’t interrupt, young man. We are having a private conversation,” begged Miss Briggs laughingly. However, she and Grace finished their talk in lower tones, and soon after that quiet settled over the camp, the guide being curled up in his blankets by the fire, long since sound asleep.

It was shortly after midnight that Grace, awakened by the snorting and stamping of the ponies, sat up to listen. She knew that something had disturbed them, but before she could get up to



investigate, the camp was startled by a wild yell from Stacy Brown, who occupied a little shelter tent by himself.

"Yeow — wow! They're after me!" howled Stacy, rushing from his tent in a high state of excitement. By this time the Overlanders were running towards him, Jim Badger in the lead.

"They're after me — right after me!" explained the fat boy almost incoherently.

The out-turning Overlanders came to a sudden halt. Three big, shadowy figures were discovered ambling away from the camp.

"Bears!" screamed Emma Dean.

"Grizzlies," supplemented the guide.

"Oh, wow!" yelled Chunky, vanishing into his tent. "What's the shortest route to the railroad station?"

"Keep quiet. Don't stir them up," warned Jim Badger. "They are after grub, that's all."

"It looks as though we were the ones to get excited, not the bears," exclaimed Miss Briggs. "Do I understand you to mean that we are the food they are after?"

At this juncture, Stacy Brown was seen to spring from his tent, rifle in hand.

"Stop that!" thundered Hippy.

"Put down that gun!" commanded Tom Gray sternly.

Too late! Badly frightened, Stacy threw the

gun to his shoulder, and fired after the barest pretense at aiming. Chunky fully intended to empty the magazine at the retreating bears, but before he could fire a second time Lieutenant Wingate struck up his arm, sending the muzzle of the rifle pointing skyward, just as the fat boy pulled the trigger.

"Don't be a fool! What are you trying to do?" demanded Hippy.

"I shot one, I did," cried Stacy exultingly as Hippy took the rifle from him.

"No you didn't," retorted the guide. "And a mighty lucky thing for you that you didn't. It's against the Park rules."

"Is it against the law to stop wild animals from eating you?" demanded the fat boy indignantly.

"I reckon it ain't."

"It's a poor rule that doesn't work both ways. If the bears have a right to try to eat me, I surely have a right to see to it that they don't. Such fool laws! You make me weary."

The bears were now nowhere to be seen. At the first shot, which, fortunately, had gone wide of the mark, they had ambled away into the darkness. The guide seemed ill at ease.

"Just the same you shouldn't have done that, young feller," he said with a shake of the head. "It may git us into a lot of trouble."

"Huh! I came near getting into trouble as it

was. Do you know, one of those beasts was coming right into my tent?"

"Bears always hang around a camp at night lookin' for an easy livin'. They never do no harm to anybody if they're let alone. When the she-bears have cubs with them, though, they're mighty touchy. I hope nobody heard that shot."

"Why?" demanded Miss Briggs.

"If anybody did we'll hear from it."

"They had better not bother me," scoffed Stacy. "I know my business, and if they say anything to me I'll tell them a thing or two."

At Grace's suggestion the party returned to their beds. Badger said the bears had had too big a scare to permit them to come back that night, so the Overlanders turned in to finish their night's rest.

"If you folks was over to the Mammoth Springs Hotel now, you'd find the bears at the dump there finishin' their meal," said the guide as they bade him good-night.

"I hope to goodness that the beasts stay there," muttered Emma, who was still considerably frightened.

The party had little more than composed themselves between their blankets than the hoof beats of rapidly moving horses were heard, and once more the Overland Riders sat up in their beds listening.

"Hulloa the camp!" shouted a voice as two horses halted close by.

"What do you want?" demanded Stacy, peering from his tent; the others of the party who had heard the hail and the fat boy's answer decided to lie still and await developments.

"Hear anybody shooting 'round here?" asked one of the horsemen.

"Hear anybody shooting?" repeated Stacy. "How could I hear anybody shooting when I was in bed and asleep?"

"That wasn't what I asked you, young fellow."

"That wasn't what I answered you, either," came back Stacy promptly.

"Who is the boss of this party?"

"I am," answered Chunky pompously.

"Who are you?"

"I'm Brown. Who are you?"

"I'm White of —"

"Ho-ho," laughed Stacy. "Lucky we aren't Black and Blue, isn't it?"

"We're Park guards from the Thirteenth Cavalry. We think shots were fired from this camp and we want to know why." The trooper got down, handing his bridle rein to his companion. "I want to see the rest of this outfit."

At this juncture Tom and Hippy stepped out and bade the guards a courteous good-evening, while the girls of the party were dressing.



"Who are you?" demanded the trooper, turning sharply on the two men.

Hippy introduced himself and Tom, and told the guard that the outfit was the Overland Riders starting in to ride the Yellowstone Park.

"What do you know about the shots we heard?"

"Two shots were fired here, sir, a short time ago. I don't know whether or not they were the ones you heard."

"It was a mistake," spoke up Tom Gray. "The one who fired the shots was laboring under great excitement at the time and did not realize that he was doing wrong."

"Who fired them?"

No one answered, and the question was repeated.

"I do not know that we are obliged to answer that question," replied Lieutenant Wingate after a slight hesitation. "I will take the responsibility, whatever it may be."

"No, he won't," announced Stacy Brown, stepping forward. "He didn't do the shooting. I did it."

The guard looked perplexed.

"Somebody around these parts is lying," he said. Hippy flushed.

"I tell you I did it," insisted Stacy.

"Be quiet, Stacy. I am speaking with the guard," rebuked Hippy.

"I won't. I guess I've got a right to talk if I want to. I'll tell you what happened, Mr. Guard. I woke up and found a big bear coming into my tent, and I grabbed up my gun and shot at him. That's all there was to it."

"Did you hit him?" demanded the guard.

"I reckon I did. I never miss what I shoot at," answered the fat boy boastfully.

The Overlanders groaned under their breaths. Badger, who had got up unnoticed, was standing in the background listening to the conversation.

"Have you a guide?" asked the trooper.

"Yes."

"Why didn't he prevent the shooting?"

"The guide was asleep," explained Hippy. "No harm was done, as this young man plainly did not hit either of the animals. We are very sorry that a park regulation has been violated by one of our party, and assure you that it will not occur again."

"I reckon we'll stay here to-night," announced the guard.

"We shall be glad to have you," spoke up Tom. "Mr. Badger, take care of these men's horses. You may have my tent, gentlemen. I have my sleeping bag."

"I reckon you don't have to disturb yourselves. We'll bunk on the ground. First, we want to see the rest of your party."

"They are all women," answered Hippy. "I don't know whether you can see them or not."

At this juncture the girls stepped out, each fully dressed, and the troopers saluted, which salutes were returned snappily by the Overland girls, rather to the amazement of the two Park guards. The troopers had given Badger a keen look, and that was all, but instead of permitting him to care for their mounts, they led them over and tethered them with the Overland ponies. When they returned, the Overlanders were turning in. One trooper lay down just inside the tent occupied by Tom and Hippy, the other rolling up in his blanket at the entrance to Stacy Brown's shelter tent. Stacy eyed the man sourly. In his heart he hoped that the grizzlies would come back and give the fellow a scare. Stacy did not take the situation very seriously.

"Maybe you would like my bed," suggested the fat boy.

"This will do, thanks."

"Why do you hang around me?"

"To see that you don't get into any more mix-ups," was the brief reply.

"You better look out for yourself, Mr. Man. I know how to take care of myself. I'm no tenderfoot."

The trooper was snoring, and Stacy sat eyeing the fellow disgustedly.

"I wouldn't be such a sleepyhead for anything. He went to sleep while I was talking to him. I wish someone would talk me to sleep every night," muttered the fat boy drowsily, then began to snore. Stacy had talked himself to sleep.

Tom Gray and Lieutenant Wingate thought they knew why the troopers were remaining in the camp. Grace and Elfreda, in a whispered conversation, talked the matter over and came to what proved to be the right conclusion. The Park guards had shown themselves to be good fellows, and thawed out considerably before the smiles of the girls. Badger was the sour one of the party. He did not like the turn affairs had taken.

All hands had a good sleep for the rest of the night, and when the Overland Riders awakened they found the two troopers up and brushing up their own equipment. They ate breakfast with their hosts and then sat about until after eight o'clock, but as soon as the breakfast had been cleared away Trooper White rose.

"You will all get your horses and come with me," he announced sharply.

"Where to?" questioned Tom Gray.

"To the Superintendent of the reservation."

"Yes, thank you. We wish to see him," nodded Tom.

"I reckon he will want to see you, too," grinned White.



"Just what do you mean by that, Buddy?" demanded Hippy.

"I mean that you are all under arrest," replied the trooper sternly.

"Un — under arrest!" gasped Emma Dean.

"Pinched!" groaned Stacy Brown. "This is too much."

## CHAPTER V

### STACY GETS ANOTHER SHOCK

"STEP lively! It is time we were at the fort," urged the trooper.

"I call this an outrage," declared Nora Wingate heatedly.

The guard made no reply, but strode away towards his horse, returning a few moments later with the animal saddled and bridled.

"As we shall not return here in all probability, would it not be wise to break camp?" suggested Grace.

"Can't wait for that," returned White briskly.

"Get your horses."

Hippy bristled.

"My dear sir, even if you are the United States

Government, we are not going to leave this camp unprotected. If you can't wait, have your companion remain here and guard it until our return. Understand? I refuse to leave this camp unprotected, nor can you make me do so. Now, which shall it be — strike camp or have the other guard stay here? ”

The trooper eyed Lieutenant Wingate steadily for a few seconds, and the lieutenant returned the gaze in kind.

“ Strike your camp! ” ordered White tersely.

Hippy nodded to his companions. Badger grinned. He was much pleased that Hippy had faced the troopers and made them give in to him, but he well knew that the party was not yet at the end of their troubles. There was still Colonel Appleby at the fort to be reckoned with, and the colonel was known to be a stern man. Of course the Overland Riders were not yet bothering themselves about the colonel.

Within half an hour the camp was struck and the outfit packed, the two troopers interestedly observing the work, and nodding approvingly. The Overland party set out soon after that, White and his companion riding ahead, Jim Badger bringing up the rear, but this morning the Riders were unusually quiet.

After reaching the fort on the plateau where the Mammoth Springs Hotel was located, White

ordered his prisoners to dismount and follow him. They were escorted into Colonel Appleby's presence.

"What have you to say to this?" demanded the colonel, after Trooper White had briefly stated the case against the Overlanders.

"We do not deny the facts, sir," replied Tom Gray. "I assure you, though, that there was no intent to violate Park regulations."

Colonel Appleby regarded the party with keen appraising gaze, and saw that he was dealing with people of refinement.

"Which one did the shooting?" he demanded finally.

"I did," answered Stacy, standing up.

"Explain how you came to discharge your rifle."

Stacy did so, telling the story of the incident exactly as it had occurred. He saw that it would be futile to try to impress the colonel with his importance. The officer listened attentively.

"Did you hit the bear?"

"I — I guess I didn't. I couldn't see very well in the darkness," answered Chunky rather lamely.

"I am positive that he did not hit a bear," volunteered Lieutenant Wingate.

"Mr. Wingate struck up the shooter's arm as he was taking his second shot," interjected Tom.

The colonel regarded Tom shrewdly, with the suspicion of a twinkle in his eyes.

"As you undoubtedly are aware, discharging firearms in the Park is a serious offense. Strict regulations govern the carrying of arms, and for reasons which you will readily understand. In the circumstances, I have no alternative in the matter. I might imprison the young man, but I shall not do so. Instead, I shall impose a fine of fifty dollars, and —"

"Fifty dollars!" gasped Chunky, aghast.

"As I was about to say," resumed the officer, "I fine you fifty dollars, but will remit the fine pending your future good behavior."

Stacy Brown drew a long sigh of relief.

"I shall require, however, that your party give up their arms or have them sealed to remain so until you leave the Park. This is customary. Your side arms, if you have any, you are at liberty to carry as usual. Instead of giving up their arms, travelers ordinarily prefer to have the locks of the weapons sealed, so that, in case they are beset by bear or other animals, they may have a means of defending themselves. This sometimes occurs."

"If a bear tackles me, may I kill him?" interposed Stacy hopefully.

"Self-preservation is the first law of nature, young man. So far as I know that law has never been repealed," smiled the colonel. "But make no mistake in this matter. It is generally better to run than to shoot. You are guiding this party,



are you not?" he demanded, turning to Jim Badger.

"Yes, sir."

"Then I shall hold you, as well as your employers, responsible, for any violation of Park regulations. That will be all. You will please register, get your permits, and turn your weapons over to the guard to be sealed, provided you wish to take them with you."

After thanking the officer, the party walked out, Stacy soberly, the others smiling broadly.

"I wonder what next?" laughed Nora.

"Probably a life sentence for Stacy," answered Elfreda.

"I shan't serve it alone," retorted Chunky.

After having the locks of their weapons sealed with sealing wax, the Overland party left the fort, and immediately held a consultation with their guide, at which they decided to make camp near by, using the Springs section as a base for a few days while exploring that part of the Park.

A camp site was selected about half way up the slope, overlooking the fort, the plateau and the hotel. It was both sightly and delightful there, and their camp was made with some idea to permanency. Badger proved himself to be extremely handy at this work, and the Overlanders concluded that he was going to be a useful man for them.

The work was finished shortly before noon,

and Grace suggested that they all go to the hotel for luncheon, a suggestion that was enthusiastically approved, so, putting on their "best," the party rode down to the hotel, where they enjoyed a real meal of brook trout and other good things. After luncheon they sat on the broad veranda watching the splendid teams hooked to Concord coaches, carrying parties of tourists to the geysers or on a journey around the Park itself.

From the verandas of the hotel were visible the dazzling white terraces of the Mammoth Springs, shining like ridges of solid silver in the bright sunlight. From the plateau, terrace rose upon terrace, finally disappearing among the pines far up on the opposite mountain-side. The guide told them that there were two hundred acres of these terraces.

"Yonder phenomenon that delights and mystifies, is simply calcareous material deposited by the overflowing springs held in — in a — a — well, in a chemical solution," finished Tom hesitatingly.

"Ahem!" said Emma.

The others nodded solemnly, their eyes regarding the entrancing scene before them. In the far distance lay the Gallatin Range, ten thousand feet above the level of the sea, while, from the broad plateau, on which they were, rose Electric Peak, bordered at its base by a fringe of slender green pines. The Peak, from the first, held a strong

appeal for the Overland Riders. Perhaps it was the name, perhaps something that they had heard about it, but whatever the reason, they determined to climb the Peak, where they were destined to learn more than guide books could tell them of Nature's vast storage battery.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE INFANT GEYSER GETS BUSY

“**I** AM going to visit the terraces,” announced Grace after breakfast next morning. “Who is coming with me?”

“The entire party, I reckon,” answered Elfreda. “Ponies or on foot?”

“Ponies, of course,” spoke up Hippy. “Walking is most tiresome exercise. That’s why I took up flying when we entered the World War,” he added amid laughter.

An early start was made that morning, and shortly after sun-up the Overlanders dismounted at the base of the terraces, tethered their horses, and, led by the guide, began the upward climb, Stacy Brown, as usual, straggling some distance behind his companions. The party’s first halt

was made at the "Infant Geyser," and much merriment followed when the guide told them what it was.

"What's all the row about?" demanded Stacy as he came puffing up and saw a column of water, about the size of a lead pencil, squirting a few inches above the ground. "What is that thing?"

"Perhaps it is 'Old Faithful,'" answered Emma teasingly.

"You don't say?" Stacy drew near, eyeing the "Infant" appraisingly.

"This is the 'Infant Geyser,'" Grace informed him. "'Old Faithful' throws a column of water one hundred and fifty feet high."

"You don't say?" repeated the fat boy. "How often?"

"About once every hour, I believe, Come! The others are getting ahead of us," urged Grace, moving on up the mountain-side.

Stacy glanced up the terraces, then down at the ponies, and concluding that his party would have to pass the "Infant" on their return, decided to remain where he was and "wait for the explosion" of the little geyser. The Overlanders, however, apprehensive that the boy might get into fresh difficulties, cast frequent glances in his direction. Finally, Jim Badger became suddenly interested too.

"What's he doin'?" demanded the guide.



Stacy appeared to be hammering at something, and was so busy at his task that he probably had forgotten the very existence of his companions. After a few moments of activity on his part, they saw him get up and begin to jump up and down.

"I reckon we'd better find out what that boy is up to," suggested Tom Gray. "After this we mustn't let him get away from us. We had better make haste." Tom started sprinting down the terraces, followed by the others of the party, running, sliding, stumbling and laughing at their frequent mishaps.

"Oh, look!" cried Emma Dean.

There was no need for her warning shout, for every member of the Overland party had seen Stacy Brown suddenly fade out of sight, as a dull report assailed their ears, and a volume of steam and water showered over the immediate vicinity of the "Infant." The fat boy was now nowhere to be seen.

"He's done it! He's done it!" wailed Nora.

"What's happened?" shouted Lieutenant Wingate, the first to reach the "Infant."

"I'm boiled alive!" groaned Stacy, who was found lying flat on his back, the picture of misery.

"Put me on a chunk of ice. Oh, wow!"

"What is it?" called Tom Gray, running up red of face and out of breath.

"The geezer blew up," moaned Chunky.

"Stop your nonsense!" commanded Hippy, giving his fat nephew a vigorous shake. "Did the geyser erupt?"

"Did it erupt? Look at me!"

"He's been doin' somethin' to that spouter," declared the guide, who had been examining the exploded "Infant." "I reckon we'd better be git-tin' out of here before one of them Park guards comes nosin' 'round."

"I can't walk or ride. I'm all scalded," complained Stacy. "I can't even sit down, and I know I'll have to sleep standing up, like a horse."

"All right, stay where you are," retorted Tom Gray. "When the guards come along I reckon you will move."

This warning had the desired effect, and Chunky got up without assistance, starting at a limping run for his pony. He appeared to be stiff in every joint, and used his legs as if they were a pair of wooden pegs stuck into his body at the hips. It was a funny sight, but only Emma Dean laughed.

The Overlanders quickly mounted and rode away, finally pulling up under a thick growth of slender pines.

"Why should we run away like this? We have done nothing," protested Miss Briggs.

"Mebby we have," answered Badger enigmatically. "If you folks want to, we can go back soon. Then everythin' will be all right, but don't you

let anybody know you was near that spouter when it went off, Brown."

"I want to examine that geyser further," announced Tom after the party had rested for a few moments. "Now that the excitement is over we will ride back and have a look at it."

The Overlanders followed Tom, and as they finally came on a level with the "Infant" they discovered two Park guards intently gazing into the hole in the ground left by the explosion.

"What's the matter?" called Jim Badger.

"I reckon the baby had the colic," answered a guard.

"Ho, ho; ha, ha!" laughed Chunky. "That's a good joke."

"Something must have stopped the vent," said the guard.

Stacy suggested that perhaps a rock may have got jammed in the hole.

"No harm done. So long," called the troopers as they started away.

"Now tell us about it," urged Elfreda, gently tugging at Stacy's sleeve. "What did you do to that geyser?"

"I? Why, noth—"

"Never mind, Stacy. We don't care to know anything about it," interrupted Grace. "If we do not know, we surely cannot answer questions, should any be asked. Are we all agreed on that?"

All except Hippy said they were. He said he would talk with his nephew later. The Overland Riders then returned to their ponies and rode on in search of further sights.

"We're comin' to the Devil's Frying Pan," finally announced Badger, pointing to a circular opening in the earth, about eight feet in diameter.

"I don't like the name. It sounds shivery," objected Emma.

"That's his thumb over yonder," continued the guide, nodding to Stacy.

"I'm not interested," returned Chunky. "Show me an angel trail, a cherub geyser or even a bit of angel cake and I'll look at it. When do we eat?"

The guide said they would halt for luncheon when they reached the "Black Geyser." The roar of this, the first of the big geysers, was soon in their ears and, as they came in sight of the clouds of steam it belched forth, exclamations of amazement rose to every lip. As they neared the great spouter, a strong odor of sulphur assailed their nostrils.

"Stacy, this is the place that you have been looking for," cried Emma, sniffing the air suspiciously.

"That is better than having the place looking for me," retorted Chunky.

After luncheon the afternoon was spent in visit-



ing other wonders of the Park, and shortly before sundown the Overlanders turned their horses homeward. As they passed the Springs Hotel, Stacy called out that he was going to stop there to buy a package of gum.

"Look sharp that you don't get into trouble," warned Lieutenant Wingate. "If you do, remember you will have to get out of it as best you can."

"I reckon I know how to take care of myself without any of your assistance," flung back the fat boy as he headed his pony around the rear of the hotel and passed out of sight of his companions.

That was the last the Overland Riders saw of Stacy Brown that night. Stacy purchased his gum and stood about chewing it for some time. It did not occur to him that he would be too late for dinner at the camp until darkness had settled over the Park. When thus reminded, Stacy started at a trot for his pony.

In the meantime the Overlanders were wondering what had become of him. They delayed dinner for an hour before they sat down to eat. Dinner finally finished and still no Chunky, his companions wondered still more.

"Perhaps Chunky decided to take dinner at the hotel," suggested Miss Briggs.

"Not unless someone invited him to dinner,"

spoke up Nora. "Chunky never spends any money unless he has to."

"I cannot permit you to so disparage that boy, Nora Wingate," rebuked Emma. "Did he not leave us to buy five cents' worth of gum at the hotel?"

"You win," laughed Grace. "Tom, should Stacy not return soon, do you not think it would be advisable for someone to go to the hotel in search of him?"

"Stacy is all right. Why worry?" answered Tom.

The Overland Riders did worry, however, and, though they discussed other things than the missing boy, he was constantly on the mind of each member of the outfit. Nora was the first to voice her worry.

"Hippy Wingate, I want you to go and find Stacy at once," she exclaimed. "I can't stand this worry another minute."

"Very well. I suppose there will be no sleep in this outfit until I solve the mystery," answered Lieutenant Wingate, getting up and stretching himself. "I'd a heap sight rather go to bed."

"Hippy!" admonished Nora.

"All right. I'll go." Hippy stalked from camp grumbling under his breath, determined, once he laid hands on his trouble-breeding nephew, to punish him severely.

Reaching the hotel, Lieutenant Wingate went directly to the night clerk and made inquiries. The clerk had neither seen nor heard of Stacy Brown—in fact he did not know who the boy was.

Hippy went out wondering what next to do. Observing a sentry, one of the Park guards, pacing up and down before the army headquarters, the Overland Rider approached and hailed the sentry.

"Have you seen anything of a fat boy named Brown 'round here this evening, Buddy?" he questioned.

The sentry said that he had not.

"May I see Colonel Appleby?" asked the Overlander after a moment's reflection.

"The colonel is away to-night and will not return until some time to-morrow."

"Who is in charge?"

"Lieutenant Chambers."

"May I see him?"

The sentry said that the acting commanding officer was asleep and could not be disturbed.

"Oh, very well." Hippy started away, then halting, called back to the sentry to ask if a prisoner had been brought in that evening.

"No. Not since I went on duty."

That was all Lieutenant Wingate could think of at the moment. He did not know what to do next, then all at once he bethought him of Stacy's

pony, and immediately began searching for the little animal. That quest also failed. He found no trace of the Overland pony, so Hippy reluctantly turned towards camp. Reaching there, he reported his failure to find Stacy.

The Overland Riders were now fully aroused. Nora insisted that the entire party should go out and make a thorough search for the missing boy, but Tom said that this was not practicable, that the wise plan would be to turn in and wait for daylight; then, should the boy still be missing, to have the Park guards assist in the search for him. It was decided to follow Tom's suggestion, whereupon the Overlanders began to prepare for bed. Some of them already had turned in when a shout aroused the camp.

"Hello the camp!" shouted a voice.

"It's Stacy!" cried Nora. "Oh, I'm so glad."

"No. It is not Stacy," answered Grace. "It is a strange voice."

"What is it?" called the guide.

"I got a message for you. Is there a feller named Wingate — Lieutenant Wingate — here?" answered a voice from the darkness.

"Yes. Come in," answered Hippy. "Hurry up!"

A boy, who proved to be an employe of the Springs Hotel, entered the circle of light cast by the campfire. Hippy strode forward to meet him.



A brief note, scribbled on a soiled piece of wrapping paper, was handed to the Overland Rider.

"The feller who gave this to me said as you was to pay me a dollar for delivering it," announced the messenger.

Hippy, without replying, scanned the note. What he read out loud to the eager Overlanders was as follows:

" 'In jail at the Springs. Help!

" 'STACY.' "

## CHAPTER VII

## IN THE TOILS

THE Overlanders groaned.

“Hippy, Hippy! You go right down and get the poor boy out,” cried Nora. “The idea! That poor boy in jail!”

The messenger demanded the dollar that had been promised to him.

“Who gave you the message?” questioned Miss Briggs, stepping up to the newcomer.

“One of the soldiers. I don’t know his name, and never seen him before. Do I get the dollar?”

“This letter says that the writer is in jail. We wish to know where and why. What do you know about it?” demanded Lieutenant Wingate.

“Nothing. I’ve told you all I know about it.”

“Very well. Here is your dollar. You may go now,” said Hippy, handing a dollar bill to the messenger; whereupon the boy ran away.

“This is a fine mess,” complained Tom Gray. “I suppose we might as well do as Nora has suggested, and see what we can do for him. What do you say, Hippy?”

"Say? I'll say that I am going to bed and get some sleep. To-morrow morning we will go down and take this matter up. Were we to go into it to-night, we probably should have nothing but our trouble for our pains."

"Yes, I think you are right," agreed Emma. "Besides, it will do Stacy worlds of good to stay in jail until morning. I'm not sure but that a longer time there might be beneficial to him."

"Emma!" cried the Overland girls in shocked tones.

"We do not wholly agree with the sentiment, Emma, but we will, I think, be wise to follow Hippy's advice and go to bed. There really appears to be nothing that we can do to-night. I'm going to turn in," announced Grace.

"So am I. And, girls! There's one great satisfaction that I hope you have not lost sight of — Stacy is in a perfectly safe place. No harm can come to him, so let sweet peace hover over our dreams to-night. Good-night," said Elfreda.

The Overlanders turned in laughing, despite their worry over Stacy. Early on the following morning, immediately after breakfast, Tom and Hippy started down to the hotel, it having been decided to leave the girls in camp with the guide. Tom was of the opinion that two men could do more for Stacy than the entire party could do, so the two went alone.

On their way down they discovered Hippy's pony, saddled and bridled, grazing on the mountain-side. The animal either had broken loose or someone had released him. Hippy caught the pony and led it along with them. Reaching the hotel, they secured the animal, then walked over to the office of the commanding officer, but it was locked and no one, not even a sentry, was to be found. After waiting about for nearly an hour a guard appeared and unlocked the door. In reply to Tom's question, he said that Stacy Brown had spent the night in the guard-house where he then was, and that his case would be called before Lieutenant Chambers at nine o'clock that morning.

"May we see Mr. Brown?" asked Tom.

The guard said he had no right to permit them to do so, but that the acting commanding officer might give his permission. Rather than disturb the officer, Tom and Hippy decided to await his coming.

"This looks serious," muttered Hippy.

"I hope Stacy looks upon it in the same light," answered Tom.

Promptly at nine o'clock Lieutenant Chambers arrived at the office. Tom and Hippy followed him in and introduced themselves, explaining why they were there.

"I know nothing about the case, except that I



have been informed that Sergeant Stape of the Park guards made an arrest last evening. I will have the young man brought in at once, and we shall soon see if he is the one you gentlemen are looking for," said Lieutenant Chambers.

Following the lieutenant's command to his orderly, Stacy Brown entered the office, assuming a painful limp as he walked, his face red and his hair crumpled as if it had not been combed in some time. After him came Sergeant Stape and a civilian, a surly-faced, bewhiskered fellow, whose shifty eyes avoided those of the officer and the Overland Riders present.

Lieutenant Chambers perused the written report of the arresting guard. As he laid the paper down, Elfreda Briggs tripped into the room and quietly took a seat behind Tom and Hippy, who frowned their disapproval at her coming there. Stacy grinned sheepishly at Elfreda and sat down.

"Don't be cross, you two. Grace insisted that I come," whispered Elfreda to Tom and Hippy. "Just leave this affair in my hands."

"Sergeant Stape, you will state what you know about this case," commanded the officer tersely.

"Two of our men reported yesterday that the 'Infant Geyser' had been blown up, and that there were reasons for thinking that it had been tampered with, so, at Colonel Appleby's direction, I ordered them to make a further investigation;

then last night along comes this fellow Bill Taggart and tells me he saw the deed done," said the Sergeant, indicating the bewhiskered civilian. "Later in the evening, Taggart met this man Brown, who, he says, had committed the act, so I arrested Brown and put him in the guard-house. That's all I know about it."

The lieutenant then began questioning Taggart.

Taggart said that he was a coach driver, and that, while conducting a party over Five Mile Pass, he had seen Brown fussing with the "Infant Geyser"; then saw it blow up. He further testified that, when he met Stacy near the hotel that night, he recognized the boy and told the sergeant, who made the arrest, of what he had seen.

At this juncture Elfreda Briggs rose and stood gazing at Lieutenant Chambers.

"Sir," she began, "if I may be allowed to interrupt. This young man is one of the Overland party to which I belong. I am a lawyer, and I ask the privilege of questioning this witness. May I be permitted to do so, Lieutenant?"

"Certainly." Lieutenant Chambers smiled and nodded; whereupon Miss Briggs turned to Taggart and stood regarding him with a steady gaze.

"You say, Mr. Taggart, that you were on Five Mile Pass when you discovered Mr. Brown doing something to the 'Infant Geyser'?" asked Elfreda.

"Yes."

"How far is it from the point where you were standing at the time to the 'Infant'?"

"I reckon half to three-quarters of a mile."

"You next saw Mr. Brown last night. Tell the lieutenant where Mr. Brown was at the time?"

"Walkin' behind the barracks headed towards the hotel."

"It was dark then, was it not?"

"So black you couldn't see yer hand afore yer face," answered the coach driver, whereupon Hippy Wingate grinned broadly.

"I submit, sir," said Miss Briggs, turning to Lieutenant Chambers, "that this man's testimony is most interesting. First he sees Mr. Brown half to three-quarters of a mile away; then in a night so dark that he could not see his hand before his face, he instantly recognizes the young man. I submit, sir, that this man's vision is most remarkable."

The officer frowned on the coach driver, but ere he could speak, Miss Briggs resumed.

"It is not my intention, sir, to attempt to sway your decision. Our outfit at the time the geyser blew up was in the immediate vicinity, but we do not know the cause. I think that Mr. Brown does, and I would suggest that he relate the facts to you. He is somewhat temperamental at times,

and apparently not always wholly responsible for his acts," finished Elfreda, and sat down.

"Oh, what did you do that for? You had the lieutenant ready to discharge Chunky," whispered Hippy.

"In the interest of truth and justice, young man," replied Elfreda briefly.

"You win," chuckled Hippy.

Stacy's eyes were large and troubled when he rose at the command of Lieutenant Chambers and began telling the story of the explosion.

"It was this way," he said by way of introduction. "I stayed behind, while the rest of my outfit went on up the terraces, waiting for the geyser to let go. I wanted to see it spurt into the air. Well, it didn't let go at all, and though I waited a long time it didn't throw enough water to satisfy a canary's thirst. I got tired of waiting; then I thought I would make the hole a little larger. I did so, whereupon the 'Infant' just bubbled and stopped erupting. That made me think I'd better put it back as I found it, so I plugged the opening and stamped the plugging down with my heels and waited to see what happened next. Nothing did, so I began poking it with my hunting knife when all of a sudden the thing went off and I got a bath of steam and hot water. I was almost scalded to death. That is the whole story, Sir," finished the fat boy.



"Hm-m-m," mused the officer, regarding the now thoroughly subdued Chunky. "You were called before this department once before, were you not?"

"Yes, sir, for shooting at a bear that I thought was wanting to make a meal of me."

"In view of the fact that you have admitted your fault and this being a second offense, I have no alternative. I am sorry, but I am obliged to fine you a hundred dollars."

"A hundred dollars!" gasped Stacy Brown. "I—I—Uncle Hip, can you cross my hand for a hundred?"

Lieutenant Wingate nodded.

"May I ask, sir, whether, in a case like this, there is a reward going to the informer?" questioned Miss Briggs, who had been narrowly observing Taggart.

"Yes. Half of the fine goes to the informer."

"Thank you," answered J. Elfreda sweetly, smiling as she noted the frowning expression on Lieutenant Chambers' face as he regarded the coach driver. Elfreda had obtained information that was to prove of great use to the Overland Riders as well as to the Park officials in the near future.

## CHAPTER VIII

## HIPPY PAYS THE PIPER

“**W**HY didn’t you get me out last night?” demanded the fat boy after his uncle had paid the fine and the party were on their way back to camp.

“I will talk with you later, young man,” answered Hippy briefly. “Elfreda, you do know how to handle a witness. Why, you could have gotten Stacy out had he not been questioned.”

Elfreda shook her head, and she and Tom walked on ahead to talk, while Lieutenant Wingate engaged his nephew in earnest conversation. When they arrived at the camp a warm welcome awaited Stacy Brown.

“Meet me with food,” shouted Chunky.

“Come, girls! Let’s kill the fatted calf in celebration of the prodigal’s return,” cried Grace.

“No, no!” protested Emma Dean with mock seriousness. “If you must sacrifice someone why not take Jim Badger? I don’t believe that either we or the world would miss him. Kill the fatted

calf? Never!" finished Emma amid the laughter of her companions.

"That's right. Abuse me all you wish, but give me something to eat. I haven't had a thing to eat except a package of gum, since yesterday noon," complained Stacy.

"Your breakfast is already on the fire," answered Grace. A few moments later Stacy was eating ravenously, rolling his eyes and listening to the story of the hearing, as related by Tom Gray. In the meantime Grace and Elfreda were talking together in low tones.

"I believe, since the hearing, that your suspicions are right," declared Miss Briggs. "I didn't think so before the hearing, but I do now."

"Come here, you folks," called Hippy. "We are about to hold a family council. The question is, what would you advise that we do with Stacy? If he continues to mix things up the Overland Riders will, sooner or later, be involved in serious difficulties."

"I should say that a warning now, to be followed by sending him home if he causes any further worry for us, would be the wise course," spoke up Tom.

"No, no," protested Emma. "Think what a lot of entertainment we should miss. We intellectual persons need a foil—some brainless person to furnish light entertainment for us. My

suggestion is that we appoint a guardian for Stacy — a guardian who will be responsible for him and whom he must obey."

"You win," cried Hippy amid laughter.

"I move that we appoint Emma Dean guardian *ad lib.*, with full power to control all his activities," said J. Elfreda in her most severe legal tone.

"Ad who?" frowned Stacy.

"*Ad libitum*, a Latin term, meaning 'at pleasure,'" answered Elfreda.

"I thank you, but fear that the task is too great," murmured Emma.

"You can't refuse. Remember, we agreed long ago that the majority should rule in the Overland outfit. Are we all in favor of Emma Dean as Stacy Brown's guardian?" cried Grace.

"Yes!" shouted the Overland Riders.

"We promise to see to it that your ward ever honors and obeys," added Elfreda.

"I won't do it," retorted Stacy belligerently.

"I accept," announced Emma, after slight hesitation. "I will exercise my new authority right now. Stacy, you look a fright. Go wash your face and comb your hair instantly."

"I won't do it!" challenged the fat boy.

"Run along like a good little boy," urged Emma. "Here's a nice piece of candy for you for being good," persisted the girl mercilessly, the



freckles on her frivolous little nose standing out more prominently than ever.

"Young man, did you hear what your guardian said?" demanded Hippy.

"I heard, but I won't do it," retorted Stacy stubbornly, whereupon Hippy led him by one ear to a pail of water, and stood by until his nephew had thoroughly washed his face and hands.

The Overlanders were convulsed with laughter, and Stacy's face was red with humiliation.

"It's too bad to treat him so," declared Nora laughingly.

"No. It is what he needs," answered Elfreda. "Stacy is getting his punishment, and, if I know his guardian, there is still more coming to him. Let's go! I want to ride."

It was a quiet and thoroughly subdued Stacy who accompanied them on their ride that day, though Emma Dean's motherly solicitude for him, even to the extreme of cutting up his bacon at luncheon, filled his soul with resentment, and the hearts of the others with joy. Jim Badger finally reminded them that it was time to start back to camp.

Miss Briggs suggested that it was also time they moved to another camping place, and asked the guide where he would advise making a new camp. He said he would let them know that night or on the following morning.

"Why the delay?" interjected Grace.

"Because I want to make inquiries about trails and the like. I don't know everything about this Park—nobody does," he added, as they mounted and started away. The Overlanders acquiesced, content to let the guide make the arrangements to suit himself.

Late in the day they approached the Springs Hotel at a brisk gallop and Hippy, now in great good humor, suggested that they show the guests of the hotel how the Overlanders could ride.

"Everyone do her prettiest," he called.

For the first time that day Stacy Brown, scenting an opportunity to distinguish himself, began to take a lively interest in their activities.

"Little boy, be careful that you don't fall off," warned Emma as they neared the hotel, the Riders presenting a snappy appearance, each one rigidly sitting his saddle, right arm hanging at the side, left hand lightly resting on the reins.

The hotel veranda was crowded with tourists, as the dinner hour was approaching. Some of the guests gathered there already knew who the Overlanders were, and a burst of hand clapping greeted their arrival.

Stacy Brown, laboring under his not infrequent delusion that he was the whole show, rose in his stirrups, hat in hand, the bridle-rein trailing on the pony's neck, as he swept into the drive that

led past the veranda. When directly opposite it Stacy's mount stumbled in a rut. At that moment, the fat boy, who was standing in his stirrups, suddenly looked startled and emitted a howl, and as the pony's nose struck the dust, the boy left his saddle with a neat, curving dive. He landed on his shoulders and flopped over on his back, accompanied by cries of alarm and laughter from the guests.

Three men from the veranda ran to him.

"Are you hurt?" questioned one.

The boy eyed his questioner out of the corner of one eye, and getting up with an effort began brushing the dust from his clothing.

"Certainly not. Falling off a horse is fine exercise before meals. It gives one an appetite. You should try it yourself," returned Stacy.

"I reckon that boy gave you what you deserve," said one of the man's companions laughingly.

The Overland Riders, in the meantime, trotted their horses around behind the hotel where they gave way to their merriment, and there they were joined by Stacy a few minutes later. His face was red, his nose was skinned, and he was complaining bitterly because his companions had deserted him.

"Stacy Brown, you're a sight. Go into the hotel this moment and wash your face," directed Emma in her severest tone.

"I'm going to, but not because you say so. I'm going to wash because I need it."

"That's a dear good boy," approved Emma. "For that I shall buy you an ice cream cone."

"Thanks," grinned Stacy, hitching his horse.

"Suppose we all have dinner at the hotel," suggested Grace, which suggestion was eagerly welcomed. "Jim, you go on to camp and take care of the horses. We will walk back after dinner."

"Before going farther, I wish to say that Stacy must apologize to the gentleman to whom he made the rude remark," reminded Emma.

To this the fat boy made no reply, but after the Overlanders had brushed the dirt from their clothes and started for the front of the hotel, Emma stepped up beside him and gently tugged at his sleeve. "There sits the gentleman now. Go and apologize to him," she directed.

Stacy nodded, and, reaching the veranda, he walked up to the man to whom he had made the discourteous remark.

"I am sorry, sir, that I answered you discourteously when you came out to see if I was hurt," said Stacy humbly.

"Eh?"

Chunky repeated his apology.

"Oh! You are the young man who came a cropper," answered the gentleman, laughing good-naturedly.



"No, sir. I am the rider that took a high dive from my horse. I—I didn't mean to be discourteous. I apologize."

"Don't speak of it, young man," answered the gentleman cordially.

"Thank you, I won't. Just the same, I think that a dive like that before each meal might reduce your flesh and do you a lot of good," added the fat boy, eyeing the rather corpulent gentleman critically.

The Overland Riders groaned, for Stacy had undone whatever good he might have accomplished. Instead of being disturbed at Stacy's remark, however, the gentleman introduced himself, saying that he was Colonel Scott, President of the C. V. & A. Railroad. Stacy then introduced him to "Grace Harlowe Gray's Overland Riders."

"Eh? Grace Harlowe Gray?" repeated the colonel reflectively. "Where have I heard that name? I seem to know it well, and yet—" He regarded the flushed face of Grace with inquiring gaze. "No, there is nothing familiar to me in that face, but somehow the name revives old memories. Do I know you?"

Grace laughed.

"I believe you have never seen me before, sir."

"But the name is so familiar," persisted the colonel.

"I am not at all amazed at that, sir, for under

that name I once sent you a message that might have been, and probably was, construed as impudent," she said, flushing still more deeply.

"Eh?" Colonel Scott looked puzzled. "I don't understand. I —"

"You were Master of Transportation of the Northern Railroad in France, were you not, sir?" suggested Grace demurely.

"Yes. But —"

"And I sent you —"

"I have it! I have it!" cried the colonel springing up and grasping both of Grace Harlowe's hands in his. "Know you? I should say I do, and now that I am face to face with you, young woman, you are going to get a grilling that I have had in store for you ever since near the close of the World War."

## CHAPTER IX

## ROBBERS LEAVE A TRAIL

THE Overland Riders looked at Grace, then at the colonel, not understanding. Colonel Scott first introduced Grace to his companions.

"This young woman with an assistant was transporting wounded men from a base hospital to Paris," said the colonel. "Their train was wrecked and the men were suffering in a cold railroad station to which Mrs. Gray had had them removed. They were without food, and the line was blocked for fifty miles ahead. She wired me for relief for the wounded men. Of course I couldn't give it and so wired her. Then I got a sizzling message from her, saying that she was about to complain to the commanding officer of the American forces."

"And she did, eh?" chuckled one of the colonel's companions.

"I'll say she did. That was not all. Less than half an hour later I received another message, this time from the commanding general, assur-

ing me that if I could not handle the transportation of the Northern he would appoint a man who could." The colonel laughed heartily, and his friends regarded Grace's flushed face with new interest.

"I apologize," said Grace. "It was not a graceful thing to do, but I think you will admit that my action on that occasion was justified."

"You got results, didn't you?" demanded Colonel Scott with some brusqueness.

"Oh, yes, sir."

"And I got a calling-down — two of them, first by wire, then by letter from headquarters, and I said to myself, 'I hope I meet that young woman one day, and when I do I shall have something to say to her.'"

"Now is your opportunity," reminded Grace. "What is it that you wish to say?"

"Just this, Mrs. Gray — that, were you a man, I should make you a division superintendent on my railroad whether or not you had ever seen a railroad," answered the colonel amid laughter.

"Suppose we go in and have dinner," suggested Grace. "Miss Briggs was my assistant on the occasion to which you refer. I suppose the criticism applies equally to her."

"I had nothing to do with it," protested J. Elfreda. "Mrs. Gray has a habit of going ahead and doing things, asking advice afterwards,"



retorted Elfreda, as the party started for the hotel dining room.

The Overlanders were the center of attraction and many an amused smile from the diners was directed at Stacy Brown, but Stacy did not appear to observe their glances. He was pleased, however, that the diners were impressed with him despite the strip of black court plaster that now decorated the bridge of his nose. Hence the excuse for the fat boy to throw back his shoulders and tilt the damaged nose up a few degrees.

Stacy ate his dinner gravely, controlling his appetite very well. In fact, his table manners were something of a pleasant surprise to his companions, who had feared that the lad's appetite might outdistance his breeding, as was not infrequently the case in camp.

After dinner the Overland party returned to the veranda where they were joined by Colonel Scott, and reminiscences of the great war were indulged in, to which there were many listeners.

After they had chatted for a time, Hippy excused himself to go back to the camp to repair his saddle. When he reached there the camp-fire was burning low and Jim Badger was nowhere to be seen. Hippy did not give the guide's absence any special thought at the moment, though Badger should have remained there, instead of leaving the camp unprotected at night.

After replenishing the fire, Lieutenant Wingate began working on his saddle, the lining of which had that day been torn loose. He had been at his task for about an hour when Badger came in.

"Hey there, Jim! Why did you leave the camp unprotected?" demanded Hippy sharply.

The guide's face flushed.

"I was chasin' some bears that had been nosin' 'bout the place."

"From the camp?"

"Yes. They was tryin' to git at our chuck."

"Oh, all right. It's a pity that we can't take a shot at those fellows," declared Hippy.

"Mebby you'll git a chance when we git in the northeastern end of the Park," suggested the guide with a sly wink.

"Not a single little thing doing in that direction, Buddy. Don't you make any such proposal to this outfit unless you want to get your walking papers," warned Lieutenant Wingate.

"This outfit is mighty particular, ain't it, eh?"

"It is."

"Well, I reckon that's right. I was only jokin' anyway."

Hippy made no reply, but continued with his work, observed appraisingly by the guide, who seemed much interested.

In the meantime another and more exciting scene was being enacted at the hotel, where the



"I've Been Robbed!"





rest of the Overland party had been enjoying a delightful evening with Colonel Scott and his friends. Tom Gray had just been telling the colonel of the mysterious loss of the Overland ponies, and how the railroad president had promised to put forth efforts looking to the recovery of the missing horses, when an interruption came. The wife of one of Colonel Scott's friends came running to the front of the house in search of her husband.

"I've been robbed!" she cried, in answer to a volley of questions.

"Robbed?" demanded a chorus of voices.

"Yes. When I came down to dinner I left my jewels on the bureau in my room. My purse, with a sum of money in it, was there also. That, too, is gone."

"Where is your room?" asked Tom Gray.

"At the rear of the house on the second floor, sir. Please, won't someone do something?"

"I should advise you to notify the hotel proprietor and leave the matter in his charge," suggested Grace. "Pardon me, but please give me the exact location of your room."

The woman did so in a few words. Colonel Scott said Grace's advice was good and suggested that the woman and her husband go at once to their room.

"I will send the proprietor to you," he con-

tinued. "You know we do not wish to create a sensation here."

"I know. But, Colonel, that is not getting my jewels back," protested the woman.

Colonel Scott motioned to the woman's husband to take her away, after which the colonel went into the hotel to look for the proprietor. Stacy Brown strolled in after the couple. The fat boy went on upstairs keeping at a discreet distance behind the woman and her husband, and saw them enter their room. Adjoining it was a short hall leading off from the main corridor, and as Chunky reached it he leaned out of one of the open windows inhaling a long breath of the cool mountain air. Below him he saw the red roof of the rear veranda, but that was all.

By the time he had finished his inspection and turned away, the proprietor was hurrying to the scene of the robbery. He bumped into Stacy at the junction of the corridor and the short hall.

"Who are you?" demanded the proprietor suspiciously.

"Name's Brown. What's yours?" returned the boy.

"I am the proprietor of this house."

"And I am one of the unfortunate fellows who have had to stand for a few of its meals," answered the Overlander, thrusting both hands in his pockets and strolling towards the stairway.

"Where were you? We have been waiting for you," questioned Tom Gray as Stacy returned.

"Just looking over the premises for clews, that's all," was the reply.

"Well, did you discover anything?" demanded Colonel Scott.

"Yes, sir."

"You did?" asked Tom Gray sharply.

"Yes."

"Come! Out with it. What did you discover?"

"I discovered the proprietor on the second floor, and he discovered me at about the same time," replied Stacy soberly, thrusting his hands deeper into his pockets and strolling away.

"Is there no way of suppressing that impossible young man?" complained Emma.

"It is my opinion that you would miss him," chuckled the colonel. "Shall we see you in the morning?"

Tom said yes, and, after good-nights were said, the Óverlanders started for their camp. Grace halted as they reached the rear of the hotel and pointed to the rear veranda.

"Suppose we have a look at the roof of the veranda to-morrow morning, Tom," she suggested. "My intuition tells me that the thieves made their entry by the way of the veranda roof."

"Leave that to others," answered Tom.

"If they don't think it worth while to take a look at the roof of the veranda, what then?" laughed Grace.

"Have your own way, my dear. You will, anyway. If you must, however, ask Hippy to accompany you. He is a better sleuth than I am, and, besides, I have work to do in the morning."

"Oh, thank you, Tom. You are always such a dear, but you know I am a dutiful wife and never oppose my husband," added Grace demurely. A short time after that the girls were pouring the tale of the robbery into Lieutenant Wingate's ear. Hippy put down his saddle and gave close attention to the story.

"I am sorry about that," he said. "The colonel's friends appear to be very fine people. How do they think the robbery was committed?"

"Someone said it was believed that one of the servants did the job," Elfreda Briggs informed Hippy.

After the party had broken up into groups, Tom told Lieutenant Wingate that Grace had the crazy idea that she knew where the robbers had entered the hotel.

"She wants me to go down there with her in the morning and sleuth it for clues. I told her to take you, and that you are a much better sleuth than I," said Tom laughingly.



"Thomas, you never spoke a truer word in your life. Leave it to the brilliant brains of Grace Harlowe Gray and Theophilus Wingate to solve this dark mystery. By the way, how much did the thieves get?"

Tom said he did not know. Later on, Tom, Grace and Hippy arranged that she and Lieutenant Wingate were to go down to the hotel early in the morning, reaching there by daylight for their own private inquiry into the robbery.

"As I have said before, it's a crazy idea, and is none of our business," declared Tom.

"Ordinarily I should agree with that, but I have an idea in the back of my head that this affair may prove to be 'our business,'" answered Grace reflectively.

"Go to it," was Tom's smiling reply.

Daybreak of the following morning found Lieutenant Wingate and Grace strolling down towards the hotel. At that early hour there were no signs of activity about the place until both got a sudden scare when a garbage barrel in the rear of the hotel tipped over with a bang and a black bear ambled away. The bear, however, was more frightened than were the two Overlanders.

"That is what a guilty conscience does," laughed Grace, referring to the start the bear had given them and to bruin's hurried departure.

Both stepped back and surveyed the rear ve-

randa roof and the window through which entrance might be gained to the small hallway. They saw that it would be easy for a person to gain the veranda roof, and that no obstacle would then intervene for entrance into the building. Hippy and Grace now examined the ground all along the rear of the house, working towards each other from opposite ends.

"Come here!" called Hippy just loudly enough to reach the ears of his companion.

"What is it, Hippy?"

"Here is where some person jumped down from the porch roof," he said. "See! The heel marks of a pair of boots are plain and recently made."

"Yes, that is all very well, Hippy, but did they first climb to the roof?"

"I don't know, but I'm going to find out," muttered Hippy. Lieutenant Wingate stood on the porch rail and peered up over the sloping roof. He was clinging to the edge of the roof with one hand while the other hand grasped a vine that grew up over the veranda roof.

"I can't see anything that looks like a clew," declared Hippy.

"Then you aren't nearly so observant as I thought," replied Grace.

"Eh? What's that?"

"The vine has been quite recently torn at the edge almost under your hand, just as if someone

had used it to assist him in climbing to the roof, and there are the marks of someone's boots on the rail where you are standing. Hippy, what is the matter with your eyes?" laughed Grace.

"I never could see in the morning," complained Hippy. "You're right, Brown Eyes." Getting down, he examined the heel marks on the ground. Lieutenant Wingate then picked up the trail in earnest and followed the footprints a little way back of the hotel. He soon discovered that another pair of boots had joined the first, and together had gone away in the direction of the Overland camp.

Hippy followed these bootprints, Grace trailing along behind him for some distance, then they lost the trail entirely on hard ground, and were unable to find it again.

"Well, what is your conclusion?" questioned Grace as her companion stood thoughtfully gazing up towards their camp.

"My conclusion is that the hotel was entered from the rear, that two men were in the game, and that they headed towards our camp after committing the robbery, and that is all I know about it. I must have been mending my saddle when they passed the camp. Grace, what have you in mind that you are so eager to find the thieves? Why don't you drop it?"

"Why don't you?" retorted Grace.

"Because I saw last night that you had some idea in the back of your head that you didn't care to talk about. What is it? Now is as good a time as any for a full confession."

Grace shook her head.

"No. Not yet. Even the bears have ears. But, Hippy, should I be right in my intuition, you and the rest of our party are certain to meet with a great surprise before we have done with our journey through the Yellowstone National Park," replied Grace soberly.



## CHAPTER X

## AT IT AGAIN

THE guide was stirring when Lieutenant Wingate and Grace reached the camp. Grace greeted him with a smiling good-morning.

"Mr. Wingate tells me that you discovered some bears nosing about the camp last night," she said.

"Yes."

"They did not get into our provisions, did they, Mr. Badger?"

"No. I drove them off before they found the chuck."

"Do you know, Jim, there's something queer about the visit of those bears — I haven't found a sign of a trail left by them. How do you explain that?" questioned Hippy good-naturedly.

"I don't. There's no accountin' for bears," grinned the guide.

Hippy said he agreed with Badger on that point.

"By the way, Jim, did you hear about the

robbery at the hotel last night?" interjected Grace.

"Robbery? No. I ain't been away from the camp. Who got robbed?"

Grace told him what she knew of the occurrence, omitting, of course, the investigations of herself and Hippy, to all of which Badger listened with eager interest.

"That'll give the Park guards somethin' to do, I reckon," he chuckled. "But the chances are they won't catch the thieves. There's lots of good hidin' places in the Park, and the guards don't know all of them."

"Suppose we have breakfast," suggested Hippy. "I hear our folks stirring."

"I was just thinking. Let's all go to the hotel for breakfast and leave Badger here to pack up."

Hippy agreed and shouted to his companions to dress for breakfast at the hotel. While they were dressing, Tom came into camp, after a long morning hike, the purpose of which he did not mention.

"Have you been looking for bear signs?" questioned Grace half teasingly.

"I may have been," replied Tom, grinning broadly.

"We are going to the hotel for breakfast, and incidently to report the result of our sleuthing trip this morning."

"Did you discover anything, Grace?"

"Yes, but don't speak of it here. I think the girls are about ready."

When the Overland Riders entered the hotel they were regarded with rather more interest than before, for on this morning every person was an object of suspicion. Colonel Scott nodded and smiled at the newcomers.

As the party passed out of the dining room after breakfast, Hippy said in passing the colonel:

"There is something that I should like to say to you, sir, when you have finished your breakfast."

"Meet me in the writing room," answered the colonel briefly.

It had been agreed between Grace and Hippy that he should give Colonel Scott the result of the morning's investigation, so Lieutenant Wingate told the colonel the details of that investigation, to all of which the railroad man listened attentively.

"That's my theory to a dot!" exclaimed the colonel. "These people think that the robbery was committed by some person in the hotel. I tell them it's nonsense. No one else appears to have had the sense to look at the rear of the house, and the probabilities are that, had they done so, they would have discovered nothing at all. I wish you would repeat to the manager of the hotel what you have said to me."

Hippy nodded his willingness to do so. The manager came in hurriedly after receiving the summons, and Hippy repeated his story of the discovery of the morning.

"You are the young fellow that I met on the second floor last night, aren't you?" questioned the manager.

"No. That was Mr. Brown of our party, I believe."

"Suppose you show me what you found at the back of the house," suggested the manager.

"It were best not to do that," answered Lieutenant Wingate. "It will attract too much attention, and, in case the thieves are about, will tip them off that you have a clew."

"That is good sense," agreed Colonel Scott. "Better leave following the clew to the Park guards."

"Yes, you are right. This is a matter for Colonel Appleby. If you will go with me to the commanding officer of the post and give him the facts, I shall appreciate it. Kindly bring Mrs. Gray with you," requested the manager, Hippy having given most of the credit for their discoveries to her.

Grace was picked up on the way out, and the party, singly and in pairs, sauntered across the plateau as if they were bent on whiling away time. They met at the office of the commanding



officer later on and gained an immediate audience with Colonel Appleby, to whom the facts were related by Hippy, added to here and there by a word from Grace.

"I congratulate you," said the officer. "You have rendered us a service. I shall now know how to proceed." Colonel Appleby rang for his orderly.

"My compliments to Lieutenant Chambers, and say that I should like to see him here as soon as possible. You say you lost the trail?" he questioned, turning to his callers.

Hippy nodded.

"I think probably it may be found again farther up the mountain," said Lieutenant Wingate.

"You are of the opinion that the robbery was not committed by any person in the hotel, then?"

"I am reasonably certain that it was committed by an outsider," answered Lieutenant Wingate.

"Do you base this opinion wholly on the fact that the thieves headed up the mountain?"

"No, sir. They were not shod as persons about the hotel would be likely to be. Both men wore heavy boots."

"Excellent reasoning. I shall put the guards at work on that theory, and thanks to your keenness we ought to catch someone. We shall, at

least, round up all suspicious characters. How long do you remain in camp here? ”

“ Unless you wish us to delay moving on, we plan to leave within an hour or so.”

The colonel said he knew of no good reason why the Overlanders should delay their departure, and added: “ If there be anything that we can do for you while you are in the Park we shall esteem it a favor to serve you. Colonel Scott, I also thank you for your assistance in this matter. I trust that none of you will speak to outsiders on this subject. Mr. Wingate, you were in the service during the war, were you not? ” he asked, turning to Hippy.

“ Yes, sir. Ninety-fourth aero-squadron, fighting pilot. The young ladies of our party were members of the Overton College unit, and Mrs. Gray served as an ambulance driver at the front.”

As Lieutenant Wingate rose to take his leave, Colonel Appleby and the others of the Overland party also rose. The commanding officer saluted and all hands returned the salute snappily, then left the office of the commander of the Park forces. Outside, they bade good-bye to Colonel Scott and started back towards their camp.

They found that Jim Badger had struck the camp and was lashing the packs, whereupon all hands fell to and assisted in making ready for their day's journey. They planned to make

camp that night at the base of Electric Peak. Hats were waved in farewell as the outfit passed the hotel; then the ponies settled down to a steady jog and were soon lost in a cloud of dust.

Prairie schooners, parties on horseback, bicycle squads and many others were passed on the government road. Here and there the little white tents of other campers were observable some distance back from the road, and early in the afternoon the Overland party halted to make camp. Leaving Badger to pitch their tents at the edge of a fringe of trees, the Overlanders set out with their ponies to visit the Upper Basin. They had not ridden far ere they found it necessary to dismount and tether their ponies, because the ground near the geysers was found to be insecure.

As the Overlanders walked out over the thin volcanic crust each one was profoundly impressed. They picked their way amid steaming pools, now and then startled by a sudden column of steam and water that shot up near by. Gusts of heated sulphurous air fanned their faces.

"This must be the Devil's Parlor," suggested Stacy.

"I should say it is his workshop," answered Miss Briggs. "But it is a wonderful place."

"Not wonderful — terrible!" declared Nora. "Were I suddenly to find myself alone here I know I should have an attack of heart failure."

"Pshaw! You're a tenderfoot," accused Stacy.

"At least Nora wouldn't fall in," cut in Emma.

"By the way, Stacy, this is the opportunity of a lifetime to fall in. Why don't you?"

"I don't have to, that's why. Why don't you?"

"Because I keep my head level," retorted Emma quickly.

Stacy made no reply but wandered off muttering to himself as he gazed into the boiling pools, his forehead wrinkling in perplexity, for this phenomenon of nature was too much for him to understand.

All at once the Overlanders were startled by a mighty yell from the fat boy.

"He's at it again!" cried Elfreda.

"Where is he? Where is he?" wailed Nora.

Stacy had suddenly disappeared from sight, though he had been standing only a few rods from them and they had been talking with him but a moment before. There was only one conclusion to be drawn and Tom Gray instantly voiced it.

"He has fallen in through the thin crust. Quick! Help me find him!" cried Tom, starting at a run for the spot where he had last seen the fat boy standing.



## CHAPTER XI

## STACY GETS INTO HOT WATER

TOM was followed by the entire Overland party, Lieutenant Wingate sprinting along beside him. As they neared the spot where Stacy had last been seen, frightful howls were heard above the hiss of steam from numerous small geysers close at hand.

"Where is he? Oh, where is he?" cried Nora.

"He has fallen in, of course," answered Emma.

"Of course he has. Stacy! Oh, Stacy! Where are you?" shouted Hippy.

"He isn't very badly off or he couldn't make a noise like that," averred Tom. "I reckon —" Tom suddenly felt the thin volcanic crust crumble beneath his own feet. He leaped back, but none too soon, for the crust on which he had been running but a moment before had caved in, leaving a narrow, dark opening. The others of the party stopped instantly, and stood gazing in awe at the dark opening.

Hippy ran around the hole, treading on tip-toes, and a few seconds later he was peering into

another dark opening, about three feet in diameter, from which a faint cloud of vapor was rising.

"Chunky!" he shouted. "Are you down there?"

"Oh, wow!" wailed the fat boy. "Get me out. I'm boiled alive! Hurry! I'll be dead in a minute more."

"How far down are you?" cried Tom, running to the scene.

"A mile. Quick! I'm scalding. Can't you get me out of this or must I die in this awful hole?"

Grace ran over and peered into the hole, and in the vapor could faintly make out the form of the fat boy.

"Quick, Tom, get him out!" she begged.

Hippy, however, had reached the scene first, fortunately finding firm footing at the edge of the hole.

"Hold up your hands so I can reach them, and stop that howling!" commanded Lieutenant Wingate severely.

"You're pulling me in two," wailed Stacy as Hippy got hold of his hands and began dragging the boy out.

"Please don't pull him in two," begged Emma. "One Stacy is enough. I am positive that we couldn't stand two."

"Emma!" rebuked Nora.

Stacy was hauled out protesting and groaning. Grace and Elfreda sprang forward and took him in charge.

"Where are you the most distressed?" questioned Miss Briggs.

"Feet. They're scalded."

"Your feet are a little red like your face, but they are not in the least scalded," announced Elfreda after they had removed the boy's shoes and stockings. "Stacy Brown, I believe you are what we, in the army, used to call a malingerer — one who feigns illness. The skin on your feet is not even broken."

"Too bad," murmured Emma.

"What's too bad?" demanded Stacy.

"That you did not stay in until thoroughly done."

"I — I don't expect to get any sympathy," complained Chunky, drawing on his stockings and shoes with many grunts and groans.

"Why, it isn't even as severe as a Turkish bath," declared Tom, who had been leaning over the opening into which Stacy had fallen.

"Come, little broiler. We are going back now. Perhaps you may have better luck next time and get done to a turn," comforted Emma.

"It will require something hotter than Turkish bath temperature to do that," declared Lieutenant Wingate.

Nora linked arms with Stacy and assisted him down the terraces to the ponies, Stacy limping all the way, which all knew was assumed for the sake of gaining sympathy from his companions, of which, however, the fat boy got little. A few moments later they were riding slowly down towards their camp at the base of the mountains. Reaching there, a brief explanation to Jim Badger brought a nod of understanding from the guide.

"They do fall in once in a while," he observed dryly, which remark brought a laugh from the Overland Riders and a scowl from Stacy.

"This one always does," answered Emma snappily.

The Overlanders, deciding that they had had their fill of exploration for that day, rested in camp, the girls doing some much-needed mending, and the men discussing Electric Peak, and the stories they had heard about that strange towering mountain. They learned from the guide that there was little information on the subject available, excepting that it was said that persons who had attempted to reach the peak had met with strange experiences.

"Are — are we going to try to make it?" questioned Nora apprehensively.

"Of course we are," replied Grace.

"Stacy can't go on account of his feet," reminded Emma.



"You don't think I'm going without them, do you?" retorted Stacy. "Those feet have been with me all my life, and I don't propose to be separated from them now," he added amid much merriment.

"Be quiet, little boy," admonished Emma.

Electric Peak towered above them, white and ghostly in the moonlight that evening, and they pondered over the strange tales told of the mountain's top. The ascent of that peak meant a difficult climb, but this did not disturb the Overlanders, who were accustomed to roughing it.

That evening, final plans for the ascent of Electric Peak were made, the guide furnishing them with such information as he possessed, regarding the best route to the top, though he admitted that his information was based wholly on hearsay.

It was decided that the party should take their ponies with them as far as possible, so that they might carry their belongings and establish a camp on the mountain-side. Full of their plans for the coming day, the party turned in early and slept soundly.

The camp-fire finally died down and the stillness of the night was broken only by the moaning of a faint breeze at intervals, the occasional hoof-thud of a restless pony or the wild cry of a night

bird. Then suddenly a sharper note was injected into the peaceful night.

A rattling fire of revolver shots, followed by shouts from Stacy Brown, brought the Overland Riders bounding from their beds in alarm.

"My 'pants'! My 'pants'!" yelled the fat boy. "Somebody's stolen my 'pants'!"

## CHAPTER XII

### "A HIGH CRIME"

**T**OM and Hippy sprang out in their pajamas, each with a revolver in hand.

"Badger!" shouted Tom Gray.

The guide came running into camp very much excited.

"Jim, what happened?" demanded Lieutenant Wingate.

"I chased three cayuses out of camp and they tried to shoot me up. I seen them fussin' 'round the tents and I let them have it, though I don't think I hit any of them," explained the guide.

"Did they steal my 'pants'?" cried Stacy.

"I don't know. I do know that ours are gone, too," answered Tom Gray.

"That looks like clothes over there," announced the guide, pointing to a heap on the ground a short distance from the tent occupied by Tom and Hippy.

Stacy hobbled to the spot.

"Yes. Here they are," he said, then uttered a wail. "I've been robbed," he cried. "Every cent I had in my 'pants' is gone."

"Was it much?" called Nora, who, with the other girls, was peering from their tent.

"Fifty cents!" groaned Chunky, amid laughter.

"Tom, did they take your money, too?" questioned Grace.

"They took some of mine," announced Hippy, who by this time was running a hand through the pockets of his trousers.

"Yes. They got some from me, too," added Tom Gray. "Hippy, we are fortunate that we had most of our funds in our money belts. Girls, have you lost anything?"

After a few moments of excited searching for their belongings the girls called out that nothing had been taken from them.

"I drove them out before they got to the ladies," spoke up Badger. "How much did they get, Mr. Gray?"

"Only ten dollars in bills, some small change and my watch."

Hippy had fared better. They had removed a

five-dollar bill from his trousers, but his watch, that he wore in his pajamas pocket, was still there. Tom and Hippy were angry, but Stacy, instead of being angry, was bemoaning the loss of his fifty cents.

The girls, after hurriedly dressing, came out shivering.

"Tell us exactly what occurred, Mr. Badger," requested Grace.

"Yes. Out with it," ordered Tom.

"I was sleepin' by the fire as I most always do, when I heard somethin'. It was one of the thieves fallin' over a pack. I saw them fussin' over somethin' there. I reckon they was then goin' through the clothes they had got from the men. I challenged and they started to run. It was then that I took a shot at the fellers. They opened up on me and I chased them out of camp. You folks know the rest. Never had anythin' like that happen to a party that I was guidin'. I know there's some bad ones in the Park, but they don't generally bother parties like this. They do hold up a stage when they git a chance. Reckon the guards ain't doin' their duty. This is a new lot of guards in the Park now. When we git back in the valley we'll report the robbery, but I don't reckon it will do any good."

"I want my fifty cents," grumbled Stacy.

"Jim, you did a good job," approved Hippy.



"Had it not been for your vigilance we might have lost a lot more. We will remember you when we settle up at the end of our journey."

"Yes. We are much obliged to you," agreed Tom Gray.

"Did you get a good look at them — would you know those men were you to see them again?" questioned Grace.

"No. It was too dark where they was standin'. I couldn't see what they looked like."

"We will look about after daylight and see if we can discover anything," replied Grace. "I would suggest that Mr. Badger sit up and watch the camp for the rest of the night."

Badger said he would. The Overlanders then went back to bed, Stacy still grumbling over the loss of his fifty cents. No further disturbance annoyed the camp that night. Shortly after daylight all hands were out looking for trail signs left by the night prowlers, but not even a footprint was found, though Nora did pick up a red handkerchief that had undoubtedly been dropped by one of the thieves. This was of no value as a clew, for nearly all western riders wore them.

The start up the mountain was made after an early breakfast, and the Overlanders rode away in high spirits, the guide leading the way, frequently halting to permit his charges to gaze down on the view spread before their eyes. The broad

plateau below was dotted with clouds of vapor, and occasionally a tall column of water and steam from an erupting geyser reared high in the air. It was rough traveling, and now and then they were obliged to dismount and lead their mounts up some steep rise of rocks. A cold luncheon was eaten, and then the journey was resumed.

"Do you see any place that looks good to make camp?" called Hippy.

The guide said he did not.

"There is a spring up yonder," spoke up Stacy, pointing up the mountain.

"Where? How do you know?" demanded Tom.

"Because there are green things up there," answered Stacy.

"Hm-m-m! You do see something, don't you?" chuckled Emma.

"Yes, but I'm not always bragging about it," retorted the boy.

"There appears to be a level spot to the right of that patch of green, folks," said Hippy. "Guide, shall we try to make it?"

"Yes. We can easily make it before sunset. I've never been up this far, but we ought to be able to git there in plenty of time. I reckon we better git off and walk now."

The Overlanders dismounted, Stacy with much grumbling, leading their ponies and cautiously

picking their way over the rugged trail. It was six o'clock when they finally reached the spot indicated by Stacy Brown. His reading of the signs had been right. A sparkling spring of cold water was found there bubbling from the mountain-side. The guide dug a shallow pool below the spring, then a channel from the spring to draw the water to the pool. In this way he formed a basin from which the animals might drink without fouling the waters of the spring itself. The Riders were so interested in the proceeding that for the moment they forgot to get to work.

"Well? Shall we start something instead of watching Jim?" demanded Hippy.

"What shall we do?" asked Nora.

"Do? Why, make camp, of course. This is where we stay to-night."

"I hope nobody steals my 'pants' again to-night," grumbled Chunky.

All hands thereupon set briskly to work to prepare camp, hoping to be permitted to pass a night in sleep and comfort, but their sleep that night was destined to be brief, for an exciting night was before them.

## CHAPTER XIII

## THE HEART OF THE TEMPEST

STACY, who had volunteered to build the fire because it required less effort than making camp, balanced the match between his fingers and thoughtfully regarded the blackened sliver.

"Girls, what is the quickest tempered thing in the world?" he asked.

"I should say it is Stacy Brown when someone asks him to work," laughed Grace.

"You lose. What do you say, Uncle Hip?"

"I suppose you want me to say 'I give it up,' eh?"

"No, I want you to answer the question."

"A rattlesnake shedding its skin," suggested Hippy.

"Wrong again. Give it up?"

"Yes, yes," laughed Lieutenant Wingate.

"A match! At the slightest irritation it flares right up and sputters and bites your finger. Frightful temper!"

"Awful!" grinned Tom.



"I call it much more acceptable than Chunky's jokes ordinarily are," approved Emma. "Even if he did read it in last year's almanac I think —"

"Did you read it in last year's almanac?" demanded Stacy.

"Well, no, but —"

"Then don't jump at conclusions, Miss Dean. It is a sure indication of brainlessness. Of course, among ourselves it doesn't matter, but when outsiders are present you should endeavor to hide your shortcomings. I'll give you another one. What is yesterday?"

"Yesterday — yesterday?" repeated Emma perplexedly. "Why, I don't know unless yesterday is yesterday."

"There you go jumping at conclusions again. No, Miss Dean, yesterday is what to-day will be to-morrow."

The Overlanders groaned.

"Silly!" rebuked Emma, her face rather red.

"Suppose you do something useful, instead of indulging in such silly talk," suggested Nora.

"Yes, you might fetch the water for supper," urged Grace.

"I have done my part," retorted Stacy. "I lighted the fire and I'm all tired out. My heart won't permit me to do anything more until after supper."

"Never mind, I'll fetch it," said Grace, picking

up the water bucket, which Stacy promptly took from her and went for the water, but, sitting down by the spring, he soon forgot himself in contemplation of the scene spread before him in the valley far below.

"Beautiful view off there, isn't it?" mused the fat boy dreamily.

"Yes, very," agreed Tom, strolling over to the spring to see what Stacy was doing. "I'll tell you what to do, Chunky. You take your fill of the scenery while we fill up on food."

Stacy came to at once, and made haste to fill the water bucket and hurry to the cooks with it.

"I guess not," he objected. "I never get so full of scenery that I have no room left for real food. Do you know, that wonderful scene down there is enough to move anyone to poetry?"

"Stacy! Don't you dare," objected Elfreda. "There are some things that we long-suffering Riders cannot endure. Your alleged poetry is one of them."

"Don't worry. I'm not going to waste any of it on you folks. My uncle once had a hired man who wrote 'pomes' as he called them, and —"

"Is that where you acquired the habit?" inquired Emma, as the party sat down to their supper.

"Indeed not. I was born with the gift of expressing myself poetically," answered Stacy,

narrowly observing the effect of his statement on the Overlanders. "Poetic expression comes as naturally to me as partaking of food."

A peal of laughter greeted Stacy's assertion.

"What about the hired man?" questioned Grace, urging him on.

"He used to sit up in bed, smoking his pipe, and write poetry after the rest of the family had gone to bed. One night he went to sleep over his 'pome' —"

"It must have been a lullaby that he was writing," suggested Emma demurely.

"As I was saying," resumed Stacy after a withering glance in Emma's direction, "he went to sleep. His pipe set fire to my aunt's comforter and burned the quilt half up before the poet woke up and yelled 'fire!' Uncle grabbed up a pail of soft soap, and, running upstairs, put out the fire with it. When uncle got through, that comforter and the 'pome' were a soapy mess. You couldn't have picked the 'pome' out of the lather with a magnifying glass."

The Overland Riders shouted, and Jim Badger grinned broadly.

"Your story is most entertaining, but I can't say as much for your manner of telling it," said Tom.

"That is about what aunt said of uncle's manner of putting out the fire," returned Stacy.

"What happened to the hired man?" questioned Elfreda, her eyes twinkling eagerly.

"Nothing. But uncle said he was so blamed mad that he had a good notion to set the hired man's boots outdoors," was the fat boy's solemn reply.

"Stacy!" rebuked Nora.

"Nora!" retorted Stacy, amid the laughter of his companions.

Supper was a merry meal that evening, Stacy entertaining his companions until they had finished eating. Twilight deepened as they sat around the blanket that served for a table, and the shadows were thickening in the valley, blotting out the landscape. Drifting clouds were covering the peak of the mountain, some so low that it seemed to the campers as if they could stretch up their hands and touch the filmy masses.

Tom Gray stretched himself, took a survey of the clouds and what he could see of the valley below them.

"Jim, I reckon you had better give the tents an extra staking-down. It looks like a storm to-night," he said.

"At the same time, someone should see that the ponies are well staked down," suggested Grace.

"They can't git away," answered the guide, proceeding to make the little tents more secure.



In the meantime, Tom had begun to construct a shelter for the fire by setting up stones about it to protect it from the storm that was threatening. The party was now well above the timber line, and the only material for fire was stunted growths and bushes. With them Tom Gray then built a lean-to in which their equipment was stored for the night. The Overlanders found the lean-to a most comfortable place during the evening, with the warmth of the campfire caught and held by it.

Grace, who had strolled out with Elfreda to look at the weather, called to her companions to join her.

"Watch your step that you don't get a fall," she warned. "Here is a sight worth looking at."

"I don't see anything worth looking at. Oh, wow!" cried Stacy.

A long, quivering flash of light far below them had caused Stacy to utter his sudden exclamation. The flash lighted up what appeared to be a large body of water in the valley below.

"Wha—at is it?" wondered Emma apprehensively.

"Lightning, dear," answered Grace. "Isn't it beautiful?"

"No. It frightens me. It was terrifying enough in the Sierras, but this is much more so." Emma suddenly covered her eyes as a shaft of

light leaped up from a cloud bank. Then the flash sank back through the clouds, followed instantly by a heavy roll of thunder.

"Is — is there danger of its coming up here?" begged Nora.

"Yes," replied Tom. "What is more, there is another storm brewing above us, but it may blow away as the wind from the southwest is brisk."

"I reckon I'll go to bed," announced Stacy. "Lightning never did make much of a hit with me."

"Cheer up. There — there's time enough yet," encouraged Emma.

"Oh, come back here and enjoy the grandeur of this wonderful scene," urged Grace.

"No, I don't want to. I might spoil your fun. You watch it and tell me about it in the morning," answered the fat boy.

The sight was indeed a grand one. The storm was now in full force, but the thunder, heavy rolling booms, seemed far away, and the roar of the rain below sounded like a distant cataract. The Overlanders gazed on the awesome scene in silence. They watched and listened for fully an hour, until the storm abated, when the blackness of the night was only occasionally broken by dull red flashes of lightning.

"It is about over for the present," announced

Tom, gazing first at the storm below, then at the clouds hanging overhead.

"Let's go," suggested Miss Briggs.

All were agreed. Stacy already had gone to his tent, and now Tom and Hippy drew off their boots and stood them in the lean-to, after which they spread their blankets in their own tent and turned in, leaving Badger to sleep in the lean-to.

"Is that distant thunder that I hear?" asked Emma as the girls were snuggling down into their blankets.

"No. It is Stacy snoring," answered Grace.

"Do we have to listen to that distressing noise all night?" complained Elfreda.

"Yes, unless you prefer to sleep somewhere else," Nora informed her. "Once started, nothing short of a tornado can break up Stacy's night-warbling."

"Then I will go outside," averred Elfreda, getting up with her blanket wrapped about her.

"Come back!" cried Grace laughingly. "It may rain and then you will get soaked."

"So will Stacy Brown if he doesn't stop. My nerves are on edge now, and if I have to listen to him all the rest of the night they will be shattered for life."

Elfreda reluctantly returned to bed and, with both fingers stuffed into her ears to shut out the rasping sounds, she finally dropped off to sleep.

Tom Gray, however, unable to sleep, went out and rolled himself up in his blanket by the campfire. There he slept soundly.

It was some time after midnight when the camp was aroused by a terrific explosion. The Overland Riders leaped up in alarm and ran out into the open. They discovered Tom Gray dancing about, shaking the fire from his blanket.

"Did the camp blow up?" yelled Stacy as he came running from his tent.

"No. Lightning struck hard by," answered Tom.

"Foggy, isn't it?" observed Stacy in a weak voice.

"No, clouds," replied Tom briefly.

"Are — are we going to have another storm?" stammered Emma.

"We are going to be in the heart of it," Tom informed her. "As I told you, there is a storm just below us and also one over our heads. If the two meet, look out."

A blinding flash, followed instantly by a terrific crash of thunder, threw some of the Overland Riders from their feet. The bolt had struck very close to them, and for the moment they were stunned, but Tom and Grace, first regaining their composure, shook their companions, assisted them to their feet and urged them to "buck up," as Tom put it.



The ponies could be heard neighing and stamping, but the Overlanders generally were too much alarmed to give heed to the animals.

A second quivering bolt, driven against the mountain-side from above, was answered almost instantaneously by another bolt that seemed to come from below. Then the artillery of nature opened up. Flashes and crashes followed each other in such close succession that they left no breathing spell for the frightened spectators.

"They've met!" yelled Chunky, bolting for his tent.

"Lie down everyone!" shouted Tom. "You're safer flat on the ground!"

The Overlanders threw themselves down just as a twisting gust of wind sucked the campfire up into the air. The burning embers swirled dizzily above their heads for a few seconds, and then were hurled scattering off into the black void below, leaving the camp of the Overlanders in deep darkness, save as it was lighted by flashes of lightning. A gale of wind was now blowing in swirling gusts, and rain was falling, a perfect deluge of it.

"The tents, boys! Save the tents," cried Grace.

"Come, girls! We can help at that," shouted Miss Briggs.

"The ponies!" reminded Nora.

"I'll look after them. Tom, you and Jim take care of the camp. Rout out Stacy and make him work, and I'll try to quiet the horses," roared Hippy, who then cautiously began feeling his way towards their mounts.

The storm was now a succession of crashes with a continuous roar for a background, and it seemed as if one's ear drums must burst under it.

As he approached the tethering ground, Hippy called to the ponies — shouted to them and a faint whinny of welcome came back to him, for human companionship meant much to those dumb beasts at that moment of peril, a peril that was to become a reality to Hippy Wingate a few moments later.

## CHAPTER XIV

## OVERTAKEN BY DISASTER

WHILE Hippy was soothing the horses, the others of the party, with the exception of Stacy Brown, were trying to save their billowing tents. A yell from Stacy sent them hurrying to him.

"My tent's gone!" he howled. "It went up into the air. Catch it when it comes down. Oh, wow!"

"Stop that noise and help us to save the other tents," commanded Tom Gray, grabbing the fat boy and jerking him from his blankets.

"I—I can't. I'm too scared."

"T-t-t-t-tenderfoot!" screamed Emma in Stacy's ear, herself on the verge of hysterics. "I—I'll punish you if you do—on't get busy!"

"Get to work or I'll trounce you!" warned Tom.

"There goes my blanket," yelled the fat boy, as, in taking it off, the wind caught and hurled the blanket down the mountain-side. Stacy was then put to work.

"Strike the tents!" commanded Tom. "We shall lose them if we don't."

It was a lively few minutes that the Overlanders experienced, following Tom Gray's order, but one at a time the tents were laid on the ground and held down by being sat upon. The equipment, such as had not been blown away, was underneath the canvas and was thus fairly well protected, but the Overlanders themselves were drenched to the skin and rivulets of water were running down their faces and bodies.

"This is awful," moaned Emma.

No one gave heed to her words. Even Stacy Brown had lost his voice, for he had not uttered a word since Tom ordered him to help with the tents. In the meantime, so busily engaged had the members of the party been that they had forgotten all about Lieutenant Wingate. Hippy was having a strenuous time trying to keep the ponies from breaking their tethers and stampeding. Such a result would have been fatal to them, for in the darkness the animals undoubtedly would have plunged down the mountain-side to their death.

After the storm had raged for a full hour there came a sudden blast that seemed as if it were tearing the mountain apart. So severe was the shock that the Overlanders were almost stunned. Emma toppled over and lay moaning, while the



others struggled to pull themselves together. As for Hippy Wingate, with the blast he crumpled up in a heap, struggled for a few seconds, got to his feet, then fell forward and slid away into the darkness.

The big blast was the last for that night. The storm, from that moment, abated and the clouds slowly drifted away. The stars began to show and then the skies cleared.

Then for the first time since he had gone to look after the horses, the thought of Hippy occurred to the Overlanders.

"Hippy!" cried Nora, springing up in alarm.

"The storm is all over, Hippy," shouted Tom Gray. "You may come in now."

There was no reply.

"Hippy!" called Grace.

"Oh, something has happened to him," wailed Nora, starting to run towards the tethering ground.

"Watch your step!" warned Tom.

All hands started after Nora, each one feeling instinctively that something was wrong with Lieutenant Wingate. They ran shouting, but there was no response to their hails.

"He isn't here! Hippy! Oh, Hippy!" wailed Nora Wingate.

"Take it easy. He must be somewhere about," begged Tom Gray. "Jim, get a light."

"All right, if you'll tell me where to find it," retorted the guide.

"Your pocket light, Grace," suggested Elfreda.

"I'll see if I can find it," answered Grace, hurrying back to her flattened tent. She soon returned with the pocket lamp and with it they began searching for Hippy. Not a trace of him did they discover.

"Mebby he fell down and rolled away," suggested Jim Badger.

Tom took the lamp from Grace and began creeping down the sloping rocks.

"You folks stay where you are," he called.

"Have you discovered anything?" called Elfreda.

"Some broken-down bushes," came the reply. "Something went down this way."

"Come back," begged Grace, as Stacy also began clambering down the slope.

"Somebody must be a hero," answered Stacy, continuing on.

A shout from Tom Gray indicated that he had made a discovery.

"He's got him," called Stacy, relaying the message that Tom had hurled up from somewhere below him.

"Is — is he —" began Nora.

"All right!" Tom's voice sounded far away.

Tom had found his companion sitting up on a

shelving rock at the very verge of a sheer drop of a hundred feet or more. Hippy was dazed.

"Wha—at —" stammered Lieutenant Wingate.

Tom shook him vigorously.

"What happened to you, Hip?" questioned Tom.

"I don't know."

"Were you struck by a bolt?"

"I—I don't remember. I reckon the mountain must have fallen on me. Hello, Chunky!" he added as the fat boy came sliding towards them.

Together, Tom and Stacy assisted Lieutenant Wingate up the mountain-side, Hippy gaining strength as they progressed, and by the time they reached the Overland party his mind had cleared. Nora threw herself into Hippy's arms.

"My darlin'!" she cried, and burst into tears.

"Uncle Hip got potted by lightning," announced Stacy. "He ought to have stepped aside when he saw the thing coming."

"Is the camp all right?" questioned Hippy.

Tom explained that they did not know, adding that the tents had been taken down when it was seen that they could not stand the blow.

"You come along and sit down while we look things over," added Tom.

Grace and Elfreda ran on ahead and got out

blankets from under the collapsed tents, which they spread on the ground and insisted that Lieutenant Wingate lie down.

"Why doesn't some one start a fire?" demanded Hippy.

"With what?" jeered Chunky.

"The lean-to has been blown away," cried Emma.

"I reckon it's over by the Springs Hotel long before this," declared Jim Badger.

"Never mind," soothed Tom. "We will build another lean-to when we need it. Just now we must manage to start a fire and dry out."

The guide was directed to gather fuel, which he did, shaking drops of water from twigs that he gathered. While he was doing this, Chunky began to sing. There was no harmony in his song, but he sawed away until he had sung several verses, unmindful of the jeers and threats of his companions.

The end of the song was greeted with shouts of laughter.

"Is that the way you show your appreciation of my efforts to make you forget your misery?" rebuked Stacy. "The trouble with you folks is that you have no harmony in your souls. I have."

"You may have it in your soul, but it never gets as far as your lips," retorted Emma Dean.



"The harmony evidently gets switched off on some other line. Don't try it again, little boy."

"I agree with you, Emma," answered Tom soberly.

"We will stand for it this time," promised Hippy. "But take my advice and never repeat the performance among civilized people, unless you are courting sudden death. Frankly, Chunky, being struck by lightning is preferable."

"Hippy, you said it that time," chuckled Emma.

In the meantime the skies again became overcast and a fine drizzle began falling. At Grace's suggestion the tents were raised, but they were so water-soaked that the interiors were soon as wet as the ground outside. This discovery brought groans and complaints from the party.

"What's the odds? We cannot be any wetter than we are," comforted Grace Harlowe.

"That is all very well, but I want to sit down and I don't want to get rheumatism," protested Elfreda.

"That's what is the matter with Stacy Brown. He has rheumatism of the voice," agreed Grace.

"Huh! Some persons not more than a thousand miles from here have rheumatism of the brain, which is worse," retorted the fat boy sarcastically, which brought another laugh from his companions.

"So I have observed," agreed Emma, and Stacy subsided.

Grace changed the subject by asking Hippy to tell them what had occurred at the tethering place. Hippy said that the ponies were badly frightened, but that he had succeeded in quieting them. So far as his own disaster was concerned, he knew little.

"All I know is, that all of a sudden I didn't know anything," added Lieutenant Wingate.

"Why put it in the past tense?" questioned Emma sweetly, amid laughter.

By this time Badger had laid the fire and was trying to light it, but the sticks merely sputtered and went out.

"Why don't you men help him?" urged Grace. "Come, Stacy, you have not done a thing to-night."

"Right!" agreed Tom. "He is the laziest man in the Yellowstone."

"No. That isn't the reason. You forget that I have a weak heart," reminded Stacy.

Emma retorted that it was his bump of industry, not the heart, that was weak.

"That's right, insult me. You know I can't resent it because I dare not excite myself," reminded the fat boy. "I'll teach you how to light the fire if you promise not to stir me up. If you do, I might die on your hands."

Stacy wasted many matches in trying to strike them against his damp clothes.

"Let me show you how to light a match when everything is wet," said Tom. Placing the head of a match in his mouth, closing his teeth over the wood, Tom then drew the match sharply outward. The result was a sudden flare, which he applied to the tinder that Hippy had brought from his kit. A crackling, snapping blaze soon leaped up through the damp brush, developing into waving plumes of flame.

"Great!" cried the Overlanders admiringly.

"My, but you would make a dandy fire-eater in a side show," declared Stacy. "How did you do that?"

"Never saw that done before, eh?" chuckled Tom.

"Not outside of a circus."

"Watch me closely and I will show you how it is done," volunteered Tom Gray, repeating the performance, observed closely by Stacy and his companions.

"Pshaw! I can do that, too."

"I shouldn't advise you to try it," warned Lieutenant Wingate.

"I'll try anything once," declared Stacy, putting the head of a match in his mouth and giving it a quick outward jerk. The result was that the burning head of the match broke off in the fat

boy's mouth because he had clenched the stick too tightly between his teeth.

Blowing, howling and jumping about, the fat boy frantically ejected the flaming match head from his mouth.

"Wather, wather!" yelled Stacy thickly. "I'm on fire!"

"Of all the driveling idiots," groaned Tom, trying hard not to laugh.

"I think we are all agreed on that subject," nodded Elfreda.

"Did it burn oo's precious little mouth?" begged Emma solicitously.

"Did it bu—bu—urn me? Oh, no. I just wanted to take the chill off the inside of my mouth, that's all. Didn't you ever try it?" retorted Stacy.

"I hope I am not so silly as to try anything like that," returned Emma.

"One never knows until one tries," muttered Stacy. "Greatest thing in the world to make you forget that you're cold. Swallow a whole handful and I'll promise that you won't feel cold in the highest altitude. Some one give me a drink of water — cold water."

The Overlanders were laughing heartily now. Badger was replenishing the fire and Stacy, sipping at a cup of water, was caressing his mouth and feeling altogether out of sorts.



"We know how to build fires where there aren't any, don't we?" laughed Tom, slapping the fat boy between the shoulders.

"Ouch! I reckon we do—I do," gulped Chunky.

## CHAPTER XV

### A STRANGE EXPERIENCE

**W**ITHIN an hour the Overlanders were sufficiently dried out to permit them to go to bed with some comfort. Blankets had been warmed before the fire, and, even though the tents and the ground were damp, they found a large measure of comfort after they had tucked themselves in for the night. Two there were of the party, however, who were not wholly comfortable. One was Lieutenant Wingate, who ached all over, and the other was Stacy Brown, whose mouth was so sore that it hurt him to swallow, and he was restless all night.

The morning dawned bright and beautiful, with skies of the deepest blue, unmarred by drifting clouds. After a consultation, following breakfast, it was decided to leave the ponies and make their way on foot to the top of Electric Peak.

"Can we make it and back here the same day?" questioned Grace, glancing over at Jim Badger.

"If you don't stay up there too long I reckon you might," he replied.

"At least we must take sufficient food along to last us until to-morrow," urged Grace.

"Yes. Don't forget the eats. I can't live without food," reminded Stacy.

Tom suggested that Stacy remain at the camp with Badger.

"Nothing like that doing," replied the fat boy.

"I should think you would prefer to remain here, in view of the fact that you have a sore mouth," urged Miss Briggs. "That climb is going to be regular hard work, you know."

"I won't stay, and that's flat," retorted Stacy. "If you folks go, I go."

"If you wished him to remain in camp you should have insisted on his accompanying us," spoke up Emma.

"Yes, that's so," agreed Hippy. "Stacy, do you know what you are?"

"Sure I do. I am the brains of the Overland outfit and the leading sunshine dispenser."

"You mean trouble dispenser," suggested Tom laughingly.

"Not only that, Stacy, but you are as contrary as a government mule," added Lieutenant Wingate.

"That's right. Call me names, but don't get the idea that you can cheat me out of any real fun that comes along on this dull trip," retorted young Brown. "I know what you want. You want me to stay here and fight bears trying to steal food — you want me to fight them with a sealed rifle. Of course I could do it if I wished, but I don't wish. What's the matter with Jim Badger?"

"I'll stay," offered the guide.

"You will have to carry a heavy pack on your back, Stacy, if you go," reminded Grace teasingly.

Stacy demurred at this, declaring that his heart would stand no such strain.

"Don't carry the pack on your heart. Carry it on your back," suggested Emma amid much laughter.

The guide was directed, in case of trouble, to fire gun signals.

"What about the seals on the locks?" questioned Grace, nodding to Hippy, who had made the suggestion.

"That's so. Make smoke signals, Jim. In case of our being delayed, make them anyway."

For the next half hour the Overlanders were busy selecting such equipment as they thought would be needed on their journey to the top of Electric Peak. Stacy compromised with his companions by consenting to carry two blanket rolls

which he said was all his heart would stand, and the party started up the mountain full of spirits and eagerness for the adventure that lay before them.

Within an hour after the start the high altitude began to affect the Overlanders, and especially Stacy, who had an attack of nosebleed. The party halted until the fat boy recovered, then resumed their climb, with continued rising spirits. Emma was laughing almost hysterically, and Stacy again indulged in "song."

"We have never before felt such queer effects from mountain climbing," Grace confided to her husband.

"It's the altitude," he said.

"I don't agree with you," differed Grace. "I feel it too strongly."

"What ails us, Loyalheart?" cried Elfreda, addressing Grace. "We are acting like a lot of schoolgirls on their first picnic."

"Tom says it is the high altitude, but I think he is wrong."

"I could almost fly away on the wings of the morning," laughed Emma.

"Spread your wings and take off," suggested Lieutenant Wingate. "You will find the air and the rocks rather bumpy, but —"

"It won't hurt; she's too soft," interjected Stacy.



"Thank goodness I am not a thickhead," retorted Miss Dean, laughing immoderately at her own witticism.

"It is my opinion that you all have an exaggerated attack of the willies. How is your heart now, Chunky?" questioned Hippy teasingly.

"It beats all," was Stacy's prompt reply.

The Overland Riders groaned dismally, then burst into peals of laughter. The merriment continued until luncheon had satisfied their hunger.

"I am inclined to believe that last night's electric storm has something to do with our peculiar sensations to-day," averred Elfreda. "I feel as if I were attached to an electric-light wire. Don't you?"

"Never having been in that situation I can't say that I do feel that way," answered Grace, laughing merrily. "I must admit that I do feel queer, though."

As they got higher their peculiar sensations increased rather than diminished.

"Tell you what I'm going to do, folks," shouted Stacy. "After we get to the top I'm going to beat you all back to camp. I'm going to jump off the mountain, I am. Hurrah! Come along, Emma, and take the leap with me."

"Perish the thought! Perish it with a big, big perisher," replied Emma. "I probably shall slide, but leap? Never!"

It was mid-afternoon before they called another halt, and by that time Emma and Nora were almost exhausted from their activity and nervous excitement.

"I would suggest that we make coffee before going further," urged Grace.

"Yes, let's eat," agreed Stacy.

"I did not say 'eat,' I said coffee," returned Grace. "You may eat all you wish from your dry rations, but we shall cook nothing but coffee."

Coffee was made and did them all good. It steadied them, and made them feel that nothing was too difficult for them to undertake.

"Did not the guide say we could make this journey and return in one day?" demanded Grace, gazing up at Electric Peak which seemed farther away than when they started out.

"He meant that we could climb up and jump down in a day," answered Hippy.

It was late in the afternoon when the Overland Riders fully realized that some mysterious change had taken possession of them. Emma Dean declared that she tingled all over her body, and Nora confessed to a similar sensation.

Stacy Brown laughed boisterously, then suddenly leaped to one side, suspiciously eyeing the spot on which he had been standing.

"What is the matter with you?" demanded Tom Gray.

"I — I reckon there must be fleas up here," declared Chunky. "They are biting me all over."

About this time Hippy Wingate, who was laughing at Stacy's suggestion of fleas, suddenly changed his position.

"There is something peculiar about this place," he cried. "Tom, don't you get it?"

"No."

"Come over and stand here by me."

Tom did so, but hurriedly moved away. About this time Grace and Elfreda, finding a smooth ledge, began to dance. Tom pulled them from the ledge and told them to keep away from it. The faces of the two girls grew a shade paler.

"Tom, Tom! What is it?" breathed Grace. "What does this mean?"

"Mean? It means that this mountain is a huge Leyden jar heavily charged with electricity — a sort of storage battery. I saw last night that there were peculiar electrical phenomena on this mountain, and I fear we haven't seen the worst of it yet."

"So far as I am concerned we have," promised Elfreda Briggs.

"Stacy, why don't you try it again? You might as well finish the experiment that you began," suggested Emma.

"What, I?"

"Yes, you."

"Do you know what I am going to do?" demanded the fat boy.

"I am sorry to say that no one knows what you will do next."

Stacy shaded his eyes and gazed down the mountain-side.

"I am going to make for the camp just as fast as these legs of mine will carry me, and take my word for it, they are going to work overtime this afternoon."

"Remember you have a weak heart," reminded Grace laughingly.

"I'm not going to walk with my heart. It is my legs that are going to get busy this time, but I'm going to make a flying start and take a toboggan slide down that stretch of rocks," announced Stacy, making a run for a smooth sloping surface of the mountain.

"Not that way, Stacy!" shouted Tom Gray warningly.

His warning was too late. Stacy had started, not for the short slope up which they had climbed, but towards another and longer one a few yards to the right of it, a slope that led to a drop of hundreds of feet of almost empty space, as Tom and Hippy knew.

Both men made a dash for the boy. He turned his head to make a face at them, caught his toe on a rock and plunged headlong down the slope,



shooting down and disappearing over the edge, uttering frightful howls.

The Overland girls screamed and Emma and Nora covered their eyes to shut out the sight of Stacy, as they supposed, going to his death.

## CHAPTER XVI

### A MOUNTAIN OF DISTRESS

“**H**E’S killed! He’s killed!” wailed Emma.

“Do something! Hippy, why don’t you do something?” urged Nora hysterically.

“If you will tell me what to do I’ll try. Stacy is probably done for. No one could take that drop and live,” answered Lieutenant Wingate.

“We must make an effort, Hip,” answered Tom.

“I trust to Stacy’s luck to get him through, but please make haste,” begged Grace.

“How?” demanded Tom.

“Climb down the way we came up. In that way we shall be able to see what lies beyond the slope on which he slid down,” suggested Grace Harlowe.

The Overlanders moved with one accord, sliding and stumbling over their trail as they descended, keeping their gaze to the right of them in hope of seeing Stacy. The fat boy, however, was not yet within view, and they looked aghast at the side of the mountain down which he had fallen.

"You see," said Tom, nodding to Grace. "No hope at all."

"I don't agree with you. Hark!" Grace held up a warning hand.

"I hear it! It's Stacy! It's Stacy!" yelled Lieutenant Wingate. "Where are you?"

They caught the fat boy's reply, but failed to understand what he said. That did not matter. The great truth was that he was still alive.

"Where are you?" roared Hippy.

The reply was a long-drawn-out howl.

"He is somewhere below us," announced Tom. "Let us get further down. His being alive passes all comprehension."

The Overlanders climbed down over the rocks, making all haste, all watching eagerly for a sight of the unfortunate Stacy. Now and then one of them would shout, and the answer that came back each time seemed nearer than before. At last Stacy's voice sounded directly to the right of them. Grace focused her binoculars on a ribbon of green bushes in a crevice in the rocks below.

"I see him!" she cried. "He is just beyond the middle of those bushes."

"Are you hurt?" called Tom Gray.

"I — I'm killed," wailed the fat boy. "Get me out of this."

"How long can you hold on?" demanded Elfreda.

"Until the bushes give way. Roots are loose now," wailed Stacy. "You'll have to hurry."

"Get the ropes," urged Grace.

"We can't reach him with a rope from here," answered Tom.

"Oh, Hippy, what can we do?" moaned Nora. "If he lets go he will be dashed to death."

Elfreda, who had been calmly surveying the scene, recommended that they all return to the point from which Stacy fell, and descend the slope on the other side.

"I think that, if we can get down on that side, we shall be near enough to be able to cast a rope to him," she said.

The two men agreed with her, and, after telling Stacy what they proposed to do, all hands began clambering up the mountain again. Reaching their former position, it was seen that the route they had planned to follow to reach Stacy would be perilous. Tom said the girls must remain where they were while he and Hippy made the descent.

The Overlanders had two ropes, Grace's lariat, and a small Manila rope that they always carried on their mountain climbs. These ropes Tom and Hippy took with them and began cautiously picking their way down the rocks on the right-hand side of the slope. It took them nearly an hour to reach a point opposite the boy.

"Are you there, Chunky?" shouted Tom.

"Part of me is. The rest is dangling. If you don't hurry I'll soon be a hamburger steak at the base of the mountain."

"Hold up your hand so we may see where you are," directed Tom.

Stacy thrust a cautious hand from the bushes, then as cautiously withdrew it, but the two Overlanders saw it.

"Listen, boy!" called Tom. "We are going to try to cast a rope to you, but do not make a quick move in grabbing it. Once you have the rope in your hands, pass it about your body under the arms and tie it securely; then, when we give the word, let go of your support. We will do the rest. Understand?"

"Yes."

Tom made a cast, but the rope fell far short of the mark. He made several other attempts, failing each time.

"Let me try it," requested Lieutenant Wingate. Before casting, Hippy tied a small stone to the end



of the rope, then swinging six feet or so of the rope in the air, he let go. The stone plunked into the bushes.

A mighty howl from Stacy greeted the throw. The stone had hit the fat boy a glancing blow.

"I'm killed!" yelled Stacy. "You hit me."

"Grab it!" shouted Tom. "Make fast and do it right. You aren't much hurt or you couldn't yell like that. Let us know when you are ready."

Several moments elapsed before Stacy announced that he had fastened the rope about him as directed. Having to work with one hand, while he clung to his supports with the other, made slow work for the boy.

"If you are positive that you are well tied up, let go and don't be frightened if you slide a little. We shan't let you go far," encouraged Hippy as Tom took hold of the rope with him.

"Let go!" ordered Tom Gray.

There followed a moment of hesitation, then a violent tug on the rope, accompanied by a howl from Stacy Brown as he released his hold on the bushes, and felt himself sliding down the mountain-side. He was brought up with a jolt, and skidded dizzily sideways as the rope grew taut.

"Let go! You're taking the breath out of me!" he begged in a gasping yell. Stacy had tied a slip-knot which now held him in a vise-like grip.

"Take hold of the rope with both hands and

pull. That will relieve the strain," advised Tom. "We will have you up here in a few moments."

It was a bruised and battered Overland Rider that Tom and Hippy dragged up a few minutes later, Stacy Brown gasping and moaning.

"Stop it!" commanded Tom sternly. "You should be thankful that you are alive."

"I'm not alive. I'm dead from the neck down," protested Stacy.

After the boy had been permitted to rest for a short time, the two started up the mountain-side with him. They made him walk, but assisted him most of the way.

Chunky met an enthusiastic welcome when he reached the girls. They made him comfortable on blankets while the party consulted as to what should be done, for night was rapidly approaching.

"Shall we go on to the top?" asked Elfreda who had been examining Stacy. "Our patient is perfectly able to travel."

"No!" replied Tom Gray with emphasis. "Personally, I have had enough."

Grace expressed some disappointment, but said she would defer to the decision of the others.

"I am for going down instead of up," spoke up Emma. "Of course I am not afraid, but I fear Chunky will surely get himself and us into more difficulties. The poor child has had enough for one day."

Emma's companions agreed with her, but Stacy did not. He said that timid girls like Emma might be afraid to climb to the top of Electric Peak, but that men felt no such fears.

"Of course you do not include yourself in that group," answered Emma without even looking towards Stacy. "A little more electrifying might do you good."

"I've got too much electricity already. I'm full of it," averred Stacy, sitting up. "When I get back to Chillicothe, Missouri, I'm going to rent myself out to the traction company to furnish power for the street cars, I am."

"Don't do it," begged Emma. "You surely would fall off your trolley so often that the line would be perpetually blocked."

Groans greeted Emma's retort.

"I am amazed at you, Emma," reproved Grace.

"And I blush for you," added J. Elfreda Briggs.

"Blush for Chunky. He cannot do it for himself," retorted Emma. "What are we to do—go up or down or remain where we are?"

Grace suggested that they descend and spend the night where they had camped the previous night.

"What! Get caught between a couple of sizzlers as we did last night?" demanded Chunky.

"We will go down. It really is not prudent to remain here," replied Tom.

"Yes. Chunky has accumulated so much electricity that we Overlanders are in danger of being struck by lightning most any time now," averred Emma.

"Pack up and get going," urged Lieutenant Wingate.

A few moments later the party was picking its way down the mountain-side. The nerves of each member of the Overland outfit were on edge, and Stacy Brown was nursing the many bruises that he had sustained in his tumble. Going down, while not such hard work, was attended with much more difficulty than had been the ascent. Now and then someone would lose his foothold and have a tumble. Fortunately, nothing worse than a few bruises and black and blue spots resulted from these tumbles. The Overlanders laughed at their mishaps, especially at the fat boy's, for Stacy got more falls than any of the others and his clothes suffered proportionately.

Darkness overtook the Overland party ere they could locate their camp where Badger was awaiting them, so they decided to make camp where they were. A small cooking fire was built and dinner cooked; then, being thoroughly worn out from their trying experiences, they rolled up in their blankets on the ground and went to sleep, not to awaken until the sun blazed down into their faces next morning. An early start for camp was



made, but as they progressed and failed to discover it, they began to wonder that they saw no smoke signals from Jim Badger. About mid-afternoon, however, a thin spiral of white smoke was discovered some distance to the right of them.

"There's the place," announced Tom.

Hippy was of the opinion that it was not their camp.

"Of course it is," answered Grace. "We are a long way out of our course, and we don't know the trail at all, so watch your step, folks."

Thus warned, the Overland Riders exercised more care. Fortunately, none got bad falls, but the going was difficult, and they were frequently obliged to rest. It was a weary and much mussed-up party that dragged itself into camp, shouting halloos to warn the guide of their approach.

"I'm starved! Got anything loose about this camp?" cried Chunky, as the weary girls threw themselves down uttering sighs of relief.

"Water's boilin'. It's been boilin' since yesterday. I'll have coffee for you right smart. Where you folks been all the time?"

"We've been up in Nature's electric plant. Hurry if you expect to save my life. I'm near dead. Even my brain has ceased to operate," declared Stacy.

"He has just discovered it," murmured Emma wearily. "The poor child!"

"What happened?" questioned Badger, frying-pan in hand.

"Not a word until I get something inside of me," insisted the fat boy. "What I need most of all is —"

"Have you any calves' brains, Mr. Badger?" questioned Emma sweetly.

"Now, Emma! That wasn't nice of you," protested Nora, amid laughter.

"If you are in such haste why not turn to and help Jim get luncheon?" suggested Grace.

"I tell you I have a weak heart. You know I can't stand violent exercise," replied Stacy, throwing himself down by the campfire.

The Overlanders shook their heads.

"Hopeless!" muttered Tom.

"We propose to move immediately," Grace informed the guide. "Is there any news?"

"Yes, I reckon there is," answered the guide rather hesitatingly, Grace thought. "Two fellers has been watchin' this camp since yesterday, and I reckon they ain't doin' it for any good. That ain't all, either. There's more news. There's been another robbery down to the Springs Hotel, and mebbey they think we did it."

## CHAPTER XVII

## GREASING THE GEYSER

“**W**HAT’S that?” demanded Tom Gray sharply, wheeling on the guide. “What reason have you for making such a statement?”

“Because two Park guards been here this mornin’ askin’ questions.”

“What questions?” interjected Miss Briggs.

“Who we was, what we was doin’ here and whether we had seen any other suspicious characters.”

“Any others? Meaning besides Mr. Brown?” put in Emma.

“Was it much of a robbery?” questioned Grace.

“The guards said it was, and that they was lookin’ into every outfit in the Park, hopin’ to find the fellers who did this job and the other one.”

“What about the men who, you say, have been watching our camp?” asked Hippy, regarding the guide keenly.

“Last night I woke up and found them nosin’ about where the ponies was. I didn’t dare shoot

for fear of hittin' one of the horses. I yelled at 'em and they run away. I seen 'em again just before daylight, then to-day I seen one of 'em watchin' from a distance. That's all I know about it."

"Were they Park guards?" asked Tom.

"They might have been, but I reckon they wasn't."

"What we need in this outfit is our old Pony Rider Boys. They'd solve the mysteries of the Yellowstone National Park in short order. Let us forget our troubles in food," urged Stacy, setting an example for his companions by helping himself to a plateful.

"The guards, I suppose, did not voice a suspicion of any particular persons, did they?" asked Miss Briggs.

The guide shook his head.

"We shall have to dismiss Chunky," nodded Emma. "I fear the Overlanders may lose their reputations soon if —"

"Emma!" rebuked Nora.

"Then, to change the subject, I presume there can be no harm in asking, where we go from here? Do we move to-day or remain here over night?"

The guide suggested that, if the party were agreeable, they might move down into the valley and continue farther up into the basin.

"You know we haven't seen 'Old Faithful' nor



any of the other big geysers yet," he said in reminder.

"Yes, let us get away from this horrid mountain," urged Emma. "I have had my fill of it. I suppose, however, that Stacy will make a grand wind-up by falling into a geyser and coming out a regular lobster, in appearance at least."

"You're wrong. But I'd rather be a lobster than a broiler," retorted Stacy.

Immediately after luncheon, badinage ceased and the camp presented a scene of activity in preparation for the start for the valley and the upper basin. Stacy, as usual, killed all the time possible in trifling, doing practically no real work at all. The Overland Riders were under way within the hour, glad indeed once more to be in the saddle, and just before nightfall halted to make camp at the edge of a thick growth of slender pines a short distance from "Old Faithful" herself. "Old Faithful" was steaming away lazily, a thin cloud of vapor drifting from its mound-shaped cone.

"Is — is there any danger in being so close to it?" questioned Nora, gazing at "Old Faithful" a little apprehensively.

"Not if the old spouter is left alone," answered the guide.

"Eh?" Stacy was instantly on the alert. "Jim, what if she should get clogged?"

"I reckon she'd bust."

"Wow!" muttered the fat boy. "When does she erupt again?"

"I don't know. By the looks of things I should say she'd just had one. If that's so it'll be about an hour before there is another spout," the guide informed them.

"I guess we can stand it if 'Old Faithful' can," observed Stacy. "Can't she be hurried any?"

"It's been done," grinned the guide.

"How?" demanded the fat boy eagerly.

Grace gave the guide a warning look which was wholly lost on Jim Badger.

"By greasin' the geyser," he replied.

"What with?" interjected Lieutenant Wingate.

"With butter, of course," replied Emma. "But don't you waste our butter in experiments unless you wish to be everlastingly unpopular in this outfit."

"I don't intend to," answered Stacy. "I can use butter to better advantage than greasing geysers with it. That reminds me, I haven't had anything to eat in a century or so. When do we have supper?"

"What you need is brain food, though I fear it would break the outfit to supply you with enough to do you any good," spoke up Emma.

"Get to work and help settle camp," advised Tom. "We wish to finish supper before it is time for 'Old Faithful' to erupt."

This appealed to Stacy who set to work with more than his usual industry. Supper was soon served and eaten, and it was decided to leave the dishes as they were until after the eruption. Everyone hurried to the basin, finding "Old Faithful" still steaming lazily.

"She's getting ready for business," announced the guide after a keen glance into the simmering pool.

The Overlanders did not understand how he knew this, but he seemed to be quite confident. The party had sat about gazing at the pool for more than half an hour, but still nothing happened. Stacy yawned.

"I guess she must be waiting for someone to feed her a pound or two of oleomargarine," he observed.

Tom walked over and gazed into the pool. He saw that there was more water there than when he first looked, and as he peered in, a gentle bubbling began and the water became troubled.

"I reckon it is time we were getting out of here," he warned, walking briskly away.

"Oh, pooh! Who's afraid?" jeered Stacy.

"Persons of limited mental equipment seldom are," observed Emma.

A cloud of steam burst suddenly from the cone of the geyser with a thrilling hiss and a roar. The Overland Riders stood not upon the order of their

going, Stacy Brown leading the rush to get out of the danger zone.

"Run!" shouted the guide.

There was little need for his warning. The Overland Riders were already running at top speed.

The menacing hiss of the geyser grew louder, and the cloud of misty spray mounted higher and higher. Then a vast column of water rose into the air, with clouds of white steam.

"Oh, look! Look!" cried Nora, clapping her hands excitedly.

"Wonderful! A sublime spectacle," breathed Elfreda Briggs.

Higher and still higher mounted the column until it had reached a height estimated at one hundred and fifty feet. There it hung, a glistening tower, showering a thin mist of hot spray over a wide area. For seven minutes "Old Faithful" continued to play into the air, then the column gradually shortened.

"She didn't make it," cried Stacy.

"Make what?" demanded Tom.

"The sky."

"Fiddlesticks," grumbled Tom Gray in disgust.

"Even at that she came nearer to doing so than you ever will," retorted Emma.

At last the column sank back into the basin,





"Run!" Shouted the Guide.



where, after being violently agitated for fully ten minutes, the waters settled down to their accustomed quiet. The spectacle had surpassed anything that the Overlanders had ever seen.

Twilight was over the valley as they returned to camp, awed beyond the powers of words to express.

"Has an estimate ever been made as to the quantity of water thrown out in a single eruption, Jim?" questioned Miss Briggs.

"I've heard it said by scientific fellers that a million and a half to two million gallons of water is squirted into the air at a time, but I never figgered it out for myself," said Badger, grinning. "I reckon one guess is as good as another."

"That's enough to do the family washing for all Chillicothe for a whole year," announced Stacy.

"Where's that?" questioned the guide.

"In Missouri. I wish I had that geyser in our back yard at home. I wouldn't have to lug water to fill the wash boiler any more, would I?" chuckled the fat boy. "I could take my baths in it, too."

"You might wash your own laundry in it, I suppose," suggested Emma.

Grace gave Miss Dean a quick, keen glance and shook her head.

"Yep," grinned the guide. "All you would have to do would be to dump a few cakes of soap

in the basin, soap your clothes well and throw them in. A regular lazy man's job, and it wouldn't cost you a cent except for the soap."

"Say, that wouldn't be so bad, would it?" cried Chunky.

"Why don't you try it?" urged Badger.

"I believe I will. I haven't had any washing done since we reached the Park."

"You look it," agreed Hippy.

"Perhaps I do, but I don't look any more run down than you and the rest of the outfit do, even though I did fall off a mountain and roll a mile or two. May I wash my clothes in one of these basins, Mr. Badger?"

The guide nodded.

"In 'Old Faithful'?"

"No, no!" objected the guide. "You mustn't fool with her. The old lady objects to bein' fooled with and she might take it out on you. I'll show you a basin where you can do your washin' to-morrow mornin', but you mustn't let anyone see you because the Park guards might not like it."

"That will be fine," smiled the fat boy. "Who else wishes to do washing?"

"Oh, we might as well all come in, if your experiment is a success," promised Tom.

"Miss Dean, do you wish to let Nature wash your clothes for you to-morrow?" questioned Stacy.



"I thank you, no. I am quite able to do my own laundry work. Happily I am not so indolent as some persons I know of."

"Oh, well. I don't know that I care. It is my patent anyway. Say, Jim, how long will it take to do the washing in the geyser?"

"Well, I reckon that depends on the clothes," said the guide, grinning broadly.

Stacy said he believed his were pretty well soiled after his experience on Electric Peak.

"You said it, Chunky," agreed Lieutenant Wingate. "Tom, what do you say to our joining Stacy in his 'blue Monday' operations tomorrow?"

"It might be a good idea. Girls, want to do your washing in a geyser basin?" asked Tom laughingly.

"No!" shouted the Overland girls in chorus.

"We do our laundry from day to day as we go along," Grace informed him. "Besides, I don't like the geyser idea. Is there no park regulation about such a thing, Mr. Badger?"

The guide shook his head.

"Not that I know of, but it's just as well not to have any guards about at the time."

"Jim, how much soap will it take to make a nice washerwoman's suds in this laundry geyser?" asked Stacy.

"I reckon half a dozen cakes or so," replied

Badger in a voice just loud enough for the fat boy to hear.

"I'll grab some to-night, but don't say anything about it, as the others would accuse me of extravagance."

Jim nodded his understanding.

"Easy, wasn't it?" murmured Emma as she strolled leisurely past the fat boy.

"What is easy?" demanded Chunky sharply.

"Oh, never mind if you don't know."

"Is this a joke you are trying to play on me?" bristled Stacy.

"It may be," answered Emma, passing on with chin elevated, Stacy regarding her frowningly.

Three times that night, ere the Overlanders turned in, did "Old Faithful" rear its huge column of steam and water into the air. In the darkness the column was a huge pale spectre of the night. The sight of this ghostly monster, and the hiss and the roar, sent shivers up and down the backs of the Overland girls.

"This is no place for a superstitious person, which, thank goodness, I am not," declared Elfreda Briggs.

Quite early in the evening a Park guard stopped at the camp to see who the campers were. He recognized the party, having seen them at the Mammoth Springs Hotel some days before. The guard told them of the second robbery at the

hotel, his story coinciding with what Jim Badger had already told them.

Grace Harlowe was thoughtful, and took no part in the discussion that followed. Strange thoughts were passing through her mind, with Stacy Brown regarding her narrowly out of the corners of his eyes.

"Wonder what's in the back of her head?" mused the fat boy after the guard had left and the Overlanders were preparing for bed.

"I trust that you may not dream of your future home to-night," teased Stacy as Emma said good-night.

"Don't worry. You won't be there," retorted Emma airily. "And please sleep out doors so as not to influence our dreams," she added.

The Overlanders were awakened several times that night by the eruptions of "Old Faithful," but finally they ceased to hear it and slept soundly.

After breakfast next morning Stacy was directed by Jim Badger to go to the pool beyond the big geyser. This pool he called the "Little Fountain," and appeared to be eager to have Stacy get there and finish his work as early as possible. The Overlanders thought this was because of the guide's anxiety lest Chunky be interrupted by the Park guards on their early morning rounds.

Stacy gathered up a pair of trousers, two shirts, some handkerchiefs and socks, and with these

partly dragging on the ground, his pockets full of bars of washing soap, he started for the "Little Fountain," skirting the edge of the pine forest on his way. Tom and Hippy said they would be along in a few moments.

Not more than five minutes had elapsed since Stacy's departure when he was heard to utter a yell. Hippy sprang out where he could see along the outer edge of the slim-treed forest.

"He's at it again!" cried Lieutenant Wingate.

What he saw was the fat boy making for camp at top speed. Then Hippy discovered the cause of his companion's haste. Two bears were on the trail of Stacy Brown and under full headway.



## CHAPTER XVIII

## PAJAMAS FLOAT ON HIGH

“**W**HAT is it?” cried Tom.  
“Bears are after him! Turn out!”  
The Overlanders rushed out. Stacy was bare-headed, having lost his hat, and even the girls in their fright could not but laugh at the ludicrous sight of the fat boy pursued by bears.

“Yell, all of you!” shouted Tom Gray. “It may frighten them off.”

“Run if the beasts get close!” cried Hippy, snatching up a blanket and starting towards Stacy.

Tom Gray, instantly divining his companion’s purpose, also grabbed a blanket and sprinted after Hippy. Despite the noise that the Overlanders were making, the bears came right on.

Hippy, still in the lead, made ready his blanket, as the foremost bear now headed directly for him. In the meantime Stacy passed the two men on his way to camp, yelling with all his might, and fairly dove into his tent.

As the foremost bear charged Lieutenant Wingate he deftly threw his blanket over the animal's head and side-stepped. About this time Tom Gray performed a similar service for the second bear.

"Run for it!" yelled Hippy, and the two Overland men ran for camp.

The bears, however, did not follow but were trying to extricate themselves from the tangle into which they had gotten themselves in the blankets. When they had finally freed themselves there was little left of the Overland blankets. The trick, however, had served its purpose. The animals were now thoroughly frightened, and, having vented their rage on the blankets, reared and looked sharply about them. Not a human being was in sight at that moment, the Overlanders, at Tom's suggestion, having ducked in among the trees. Seeing no one, the bears, uttering angry growls, and apparently satisfied that they had put their enemies out of business, ambled away and were seen no more.

It was Lieutenant Wingate who, shortly afterwards, hauled Chunky from his tent feet first.

"Di—id you kill 'em?" stammered the fat boy.

"No, of course we didn't. We gave them two blankets to chew on. I think we shall have to charge those blankets up to you," threatened Hippy.

"Take it out of the bears' hides," advised Stacy.  
"I'm not settling their bills."

"Look here, Stacy, what did you do to stir those animals up?" demanded Tom Gray.

"Noth —"

"Stacy!" warned Emma. "Don't quibble. They were very angry about something."

"I didn't do much of anything, but —" began Stacy and paused.

"Yes, yes," urged Hippy.

"Well, it was this way. I saw a couple of bear cubs playing leap frog on the green, and — and I — I thought I'd catch one of them and bring it to camp for a mascot."

The Overlanders groaned.

"I — I nearly got my hands on one little beggar, when all at once out of the nowhere, that old she bear and her mate came at me with all sails set. Then I legged it for home."

"You poor fish! Didn't you know any better than to fool with a bear cub?" demanded Lieutenant Wingate. "You might have known that the mother bear was not far away."

"I — I didn't think there were any old bears about the place. I lost my clothes, too. Mebby the bears ate them. If they did who is going to pay me for my 'pants' and the rest of the stuff? Will you answer me that question, Uncle Hip?"

"Your clothes are distributed along the way

where you dropped them. You may go get them now with perfect safety," Tom told him. "The bears have taken to the timber with their cubs long before this."

"Too bad we can't shoot them," muttered Stacy.

"You can, but it'll cost you money if you're caught at it," said the guide.

"One experience in that direction is enough," answered Stacy.

"I thought you were going to do your family washing," reminded Emma.

"Well, I reckon I will if I can find my shirts and the rest of the outfit, but I won't go out alone. You folks have got to come with me. Emma, you stand around and chase the bears away. All you have to do is just to look at 'em and they'll run."

"Humph! After once setting eyes on you, the rest of the world would be altogether lovely," retorted Emma, elevating her chin disdainfully.

"We will go with you," volunteered Lieutenant Wingate. "It doesn't appear to be safe to let you out of our sight."

"No. Stacy might fall into some hole and get parboiled. Not that it would not do him good, but the difficulty is that he might not be wise enough to know when he was done and come out," volunteered Emma Dean.



"Do you mean to insinuate that I'm under-done?" demanded Chunky belligerently.

"Certainly not, Stacy. You are quite capable of speaking for yourself."

"Say, you good people, it seems to me that our soap is disappearing rather fast," called Tom Gray from his tent.

Stacy winked solemnly at the guide, a wink that was not lost on either Grace or Emma. Tom, at this juncture, came out with a shirt, a pair of pink pajamas and some underwear and a cake of soap in his hand.

"All ready," announced Tom. "Stacy, you come with me. Jim, you say that the pool just beyond 'Old Faithful' is a good place in which to wash our clothes?"

The guide nodded, but did not offer to accompany the party to the "Little Fountain." Hippy, after gathering up some of his own soiled garments, started on after the pair, followed by the entire Overland party. Emma was chuckling to herself.

"You seem to be amused about something," said Grace, eyeing her companion suspiciously.

"I am."

"Has the missing soap anything to do with your merriment?" questioned Grace.

"It may have," admitted Miss Deap. "Then again it may not."

"I will take the first part of your answer as the correct one," laughed Grace.

"You pay your money and take your choice. It is my belief that we folks are about to witness a most entertaining spectacle," said Emma, nodding towards Stacy, who was gathering up his belongings on his way to the "Fountain," a small pool of bubbling, boiling water.

Reaching the pool Emma and Grace saw him slip several bars of double X soap into the boiling pot, while Tom Gray, after critically eyeing the pool and its surroundings, sat down beside it. After sousing his garments in the water he drew them out steaming and proceeded to soap them liberally, the Overland girls offering expert advice on laundering clothes. Stacy, who was standing just back of Tom, kicked the latter's soap into the "Fountain" the instant that Tom Gray laid it down beside him. When Tom reached for the soap he failed to find it.

"Confound the thing! I must have let my soap slip into the basin. Stacy, have you soap to spare?" asked Tom irritably.

"Yes. You may have my cake."

The soap, that Stacy handed to his companion a moment later, went the way of the other cakes almost instantly, and the pool was soon covered with hot suds. At sight of this, Grace and Emma drew back somewhat hastily, and Hippy, who was

about to wet and soap his own clothes, thought better of it and also stepped back a little. Hippy felt that something was going to happen, but having had no experience with geysers, he could not imagine what that something might be. Tom Gray, however, was too busy sousing and scrubbing his clothes to give much thought to what was going on about him.

Stacy Brown's garments were floating about in the pool while he steered them here and there with a pole, thrusting them down as far as they would go and watching them leap to the surface. "Greasing the geyser" was great sport for him, but the fat boy was disappointed that nothing exciting followed.

Nature's washing machine surely was doing its work slowly, but well. That was plainly to be seen. Tom Gray's pink pajamas were floating about in the suds, the legs far apart, greatly to the amusement of the spectators.

"Thomas, those pink legs are trying their best to get away from each other," chuckled Stacy.

"If the colors aren't fast they surely will get away too," observed Emma, amid groans.

"That was a good one," averred Stacy. "Almost as good as I could do myself."

"What is that boy up to?" whispered Elfreda, addressing Grace. "I know it is mischief, but just what it is I have been unable to discover."

"Sh-h-h-h! He is greasing the geyser," whispered Grace.

"With what?"

"Soap! In a few moments, if all goes wrong, you will see something, as I understand geyser-greasing."

Even as Grace Harlowe uttered the words, Elfreda saw a column of steam and water shoot into the air with a hiss and a roar. Above the noise of the erupting "Little Fountain," which at first had appeared to be so harmless, might have been heard the yells of Stacy Brown. The explosion had taken him wholly unawares. Tom Gray was no better off, though he did not howl. When the geyser erupted so suddenly, Tom had fallen over backwards, but he was up and out of the way in an instant, ere the boiling water could reach him. Stacy was less fortunate. He was not fully aroused to the peril of his position until he felt a shower of hot water spraying over him.

Stacy uttered a yell and bolted from the immediate vicinity of the pool, while his companions were shouting with laughter, Tom Gray adding his voice to the merriment.

"Did you lose anything, Tom?" teased Grace.

"Only a shirt and pajamas," answered Tom, grinning sheepishly.

"You forget your reputation as a dignified gentleman," interjected Emma.



"Where are your things, Chunky?" questioned Hippy, laughing immoderately.

Stacy eyed the column of water before replying.

"I've got two shirts, a pair of 'pants' and a wad of handkerchiefs, some socks and a sombrero hat up there somewhere in the air. They ought to get well aired, eh?"

"There go Tom's pajamas!" cried Elfreda.

For a few seconds the pajamas were suspended in the air above the column of water. They were then joined by Tom's shirt, and both garments suddenly disappeared. Next, Stacy Brown's hat made its appearance. It, too, was as suddenly whisked out of sight. He hoped that his clothes might drop to safe ground where he could rescue them, but they did not. All the garments remained with the angry geyser, appearing only occasionally before the delighted gaze of those of the party not intimately interested in them.

"So, this is one of your little pleasantries, is it?" chided Grace, pulling Stacy's ear.

"Ouch! I don't know what you mean."

"Yes, you do, Stacy Brown. As a precautionary measure, however, I believe that, were I in your place, I should keep the fact to myself. You know that husband of mine may not see the humor of the situation."

"Do you think he suspects?" asked Stacy apprehensively.

"No, but he may. I know that Emma does."

"All right. I don't care. Say, folks," called Chunky. "Can't you help me get my 'pants'? Thomas wants his pajamas, too."

"If I may be permitted to offer a suggestion, I should advise you to wait until the water spout dies down, then dive into the pool and rescue the clothes," volunteered Emma.

"No, thank you. I was in hot water the other day and I still feel like a boiled potato with the skin peeling off. You know how I feel."

"Never having been a boiled potato or a cabbage head, I don't," responded Emma.

"There goes the water down. Now all hands fall to and rescue Thomas's pajamas and his shirt," urged Hippy.

The Overlanders caught but a fleeting glance of the garments, which were quickly sucked down into the depths of the pool.

"When does this Fountain of Perpetual Youth spout again?" demanded Tom Gray.

"The guide says that it is irregular," answered Grace. "Perhaps within the hour, or perhaps not until to-morrow."

Tom growled long and deeply.

"Will — will my shirts come up?" stammered Stacy.

"It would serve you right if they did not," smiled Grace.

"Well, they'd better. There is one consolation, Tom. Our duds will be well laundered when they do come out, won't they?"

"Yes, when they do," sighed Tom, and the Overlanders burst into a peal of merry laughter. "Hereafter I wash my clothes in a creek—in one that has no kick to it. Who suggested this fool thing, anyway?"

"The guide," dodged Stacy.

The "Little Fountain" did not erupt again that day, so the guide was left to watch it while the Overland party went off for a few hours' exploration among the other geysers of the Great Basin.

Nothing more was seen of the missing garments that day, but when day was just breaking next morning the party was aroused by a shout from the guide.

"She's going to spout again!" he cried.

Pajama-clad, Stacy and Hippy raced for the "Fountain." Each had snatched up a pole with which he hoped to spear the missing clothing. The others of the Overland party followed as soon as they had made themselves presentable, all laughing and rubbing the sleep out of their eyes.

The "Little Fountain" was steaming and hissing angrily, and sent up an unusually vicious spurt just as Stacy reached it, whereupon the fat boy beat a hurried retreat.

"There they are!" shouted Tom espying his much-wanted garments as he glanced into the pool. "I've got mine!"

But had he? True, the pink pajamas and a shirt were seen floating about on the bubbling waters, while, with the pole that Hippy had passed to him, Tom was trying to tow them in.

"Hiss! Boom!" With a roar the steam jet shot up once more, carrying the articles of clothing fully a hundred feet into the air. It was as though these pieces of clothing had been shot out of a cannon. Stacy had ventured close to the pool, but now he and Tom Gray ran for safer ground.

As for the spectators, they could not keep back their laughter. Higher, yet higher, soared the pink pajamas, a blotch on the water's rainbow of colors.

"The tendency of men's wear is upward," averred Emma Dean demurely.

That was the last the Overland Riders saw of the lost garments that day. During the next three days, however, Tom's and Stacy's things were quite frequently on exhibition in the air, supported by a column of hot water, but it seemed impossible to recover them, so the campers finally decided to abandon their quest and move on in search of other adventures in the Yellowstone Park.



## CHAPTER XIX

## FISH COOKED ON THE HOOK

**T**OM GRAY and Stacy Brown came in for much chaffing as the party rode away. The Overlanders teased them unmercifully over their experiences at the "Little Fountain."

In the meantime Tom had devoted some thought to the occurrences that led up to the loss of his clothing, and little by little was getting nearer to the truth than his companions realized. He finally arrived at the conclusion that someone, probably Stacy, had played a trick on him. Then there was the missing soap, and the suds on the surface of the pool. It looked suspicious. There was, however, satisfaction in the conclusion that, though he had lost a shirt and a pair of pink pajamas, Stacy had suffered an even greater loss.

"Jim, where may I find a store?" he asked, turning to the guide.

"Not till we get back to the Springs," answered Badger.

"Why a store?" inquired Grace.

"I was thinking of buying a new outfit for Chunky."

"For Chunky? May I ask why this sudden attack of benevolence?" laughed Miss Briggs who had overheard the conversation.

"It isn't benevolence. It is remorse," spoke up Emma. "Tom is conscience-stricken because he permitted Stacy to get mixed up with an irritable geyser."

"I consider it very fine of Tom," said Grace glowingly. "Yes, by all means get Stacy a new outfit. I should say it would be an excellent idea, too, to buy soap." Grace gave her husband a quick glance.

"Soap, eh? What do you know about the soap, Emma?" questioned Tom, turning to Miss Dean.

"Good soap makes good suds," responded Emma innocently, whereupon both Grace and Tom laughed heartily. "You are a pretty good sport after all, and not nearly so stupid as you look," was her parting shot.

That day the Overland Riders reached the Continental Divide and made camp for the night beside a little lake whose waters flowed both ways, one side sending its quota of water towards the Pacific, the other starting on its long journey to the Atlantic. At this point they left the govern-

ment road next morning and took to the rougher traveling across country, heading for the Shoshone Geyser Basin, a wild and remote section of the Park.

Arriving at the Basin, they made camp on Shoshone Lake, nearly eight thousand feet above the level of the sea.

The air was chill there, and blankets were a great comfort, but the bracing atmosphere put new life into every member of the Overland party.

From the Shoshone region they crossed the Pitchstone Plateau, a broad mountain-bordered plain, then headed east. After fording many small rivers they finally arrived at the base of Mt. Sheridan. This was too high a mountain for them to cross, so on the following day they made a wide detour, rounding Red Mountain, Factory Hill, and so on into the Heart Lake Geyser Basin, a still wilder region with which Jim Badger appeared to be entirely familiar.

Few people were met with in that remote region, though plenty of wild game was seen. That day they sighted three buffalo, some elk and deer, and several black bears. At night they heard the howl of the coyotes, which scented the presence of strangers in their domain. It was a lonely spot where they pitched their camp, but the Riders thoroughly enjoyed the wildness of it all.

"Are there any mountain lion out here?" questioned Hippy as they sat by the campfire that evening.

"Some," answered the guide. "Been mostly shot off 'cause they did so much damage to other game in the Park."

This started Stacy Brown, who spun a long yarn about the experiences of the Pony Rider Boys, of which outfit he had been a member, in the Grand Canyon of the Colorado, where they had roped instead of shot wild beasts. Jim Badger didn't believe the stories but pretended that he did. Jim did not know the Pony Rider Boys, and he had yet to learn what the Overland Riders could do in an emergency, though he was beginning to get a glimmer of the truth.

A week was spent amid the rugged scenery of the Heart Lake Geyser Basin, then the Overlanders again broke camp and crossed the Divide, headed northward, intending to make the West Arm of Yellowstone Lake, a large body of water fed by icy streams that flowed down from the surrounding mountain range. It was their intention to connect with the Government road there and perhaps meet some of the tourists who were doing the Park in the old Concord coaches.

The party found the going very rough, with much arduous climbing over intervening mountain ranges. It was not possible to make good



time, nor were they particularly eager to do so, but it was noticed that, for some reason, Jim Badger appeared eager to make the West Arm as soon as possible.

They reached the West Arm on the morning of the third day out from the Heart Lake Geyser Basin, and, to their delight, discovered a little lunch station known as the "Thumb Lunch." What interested them still more was the fact that they were allowed to fish in a little lake hard by the "Thumb."

After getting a fishing outfit from the station, Badger took them to a little point of land that extended out into the lake.

"First, I'll show you how to catch fish — trout — then you folks can go on and git your own mess," he announced.

Jim fished patiently, but did not even get a bite, greatly to the amusement of the Overlanders, who teased him until the guide's temper began to rise.

"I think I can beat you fishing," declared Hippy finally. "When I was a boy I used to be something of a trout fisherman."

"Here! Let me try it," urged Stacy. "I am a whale at catching trout. When I cast my hook they just have to bite."

"Perhaps they bite to get rid of you," suggested Emma.

Hippy, having taken the rod from Jim, made a cast. There followed a swish in the water and the pole bent almost to the breaking point.

"Got him!" cried Hippy.

"Play him, play him!" yelled Stacy. "Don't try to haul him in until you have tired him out. Oh, what a muffer you are!"

"I reckon I know how to catch fish without advice from you," retorted Lieutenant Wingate. "Jim, where's the landing net?"

"Oh, pooh!" jeered Stacy. "It's only amateurs that need a landing net."

"Pull him in!" cried Nora excitedly.

"There it comes," exclaimed Emma, clapping her hands as a rainbow trout, its dazzling colors glistening in the bright sunlight, was thrown out wriggling on Hippy's hook.

"Now why didn't you do that?" wondered Grace, nodding smilingly at Jim Badger.

"Because there wasn't any fish there then. A school of 'em just happened to come along as the lieutenant threw in his line. Don't take the fish off. I'll show you somethin' — show you the way we do things here."

Taking the pole from Hippy's hand, the guide lowered the trout into a small boiling pool close at hand, while the Overlanders looked on curiously.

"He's giving the fish a bath!" chortled Chunky.

"I hope its colors are fast," added Emma.

A few moments later Jim hauled the fish out, cooked and ready to serve. Stacy got the fish and was eating it ere his companions really comprehended what had been done.

"Somebody get me some salt," urged Stacy thickly. "This is too good to be true. Oh, what a snap!"

"You greedy boy! Won't you give us a bite?" rebuked Nora.

"Catch your own fish, and cook 'em on the hook. Put on fresh bait, Uncle Hip, and toss me another one. You folks go get yourselves poles and lines if you wish to fish in my puddle," suggested Stacy.

Acting upon Tom's suggestion, the guide hurried off to fetch fishing tackle.

"Don't forget the salt," Stacy called after him. "Fish without salt isn't so appetizing, but on a pinch I can eat them 'most any old way."

"Gluttons always can," observed Emma under her breath.

"Here! Give me that pole. I'll catch my own food, if you please," announced the fat boy, taking the rod from Lieutenant Wingate.

"Oh, very well. Here comes Jim with more tackle," answered Hippy resignedly.

By the time the guide reached them Stacy had made a cast and landed a trout. Without

getting up, he swung the fish over into the pool of boiling water, and grinned to himself as he observed that his companions were watching him frowningly.

"How long shall I cook it?" he asked.

"To taste," answered the guide, passing rods to the other members of the party.

"I am amazed that you should wait to cook your fish before eating," suggested Emma.

"Yes. You are the greediest person I ever knew," agreed Elfreda. "Don't you ordinarily clean your fish before eating?"

"Not when I am as hungry as I am to-day."

"Which is every day," murmured Emma.

"I've got a big one!" cried the fat boy. "See him flop. They don't like hot water, do they?"

"Did you when you fell into the pool on your way to Electric Peak?" questioned Grace laughingly.

"Don't criticize, you folks. You all will be doing the same thing in a few moments," said Hippy.

Tom, who was now angling, caught one at the first cast, greatly to his delight, but he cleaned it with his hunting knife before dropping the fish into the boiling pool.

"This is the civilized way to do it, Stacy," said Tom.

"I prefer the hurry-up way. I reckon that



lunch station won't make much money out of this outfit to-day."

In the meantime the girls had begun to fish, and soon there were more trout than the party needed, but they took the keenest possible delight in both the catching and the cooking, and ate until they could eat no more.

"Time to stop," announced Tom Gray. "It isn't good sportsmanship to catch more fish than are needed for a meal."

Jim Badger, in the meantime, had gone over to the lunch station where he was making some inquiries about the coaches. A waiter there handed Jim a note that had been left for him by the driver of the last coach that had gone through. Badger read it and after tearing it up tossed the pieces out at the rear of the lunch tent. Lieutenant Wingate, who had gone over to the tent for some salt, saw the act and wondered.

"What? Are you eating still?" demanded Hippy upon his return with the guide.

"No. I'm eating fish," mumbled the fat boy, to whom the question had been addressed.

"I hope it doesn't make you sick. We can't be bothered carrying a sick man along with us," warned Lieutenant Wingate severely.

"That is what I have been trying to tell him," spoke up Tom. "Young man, don't look for sympathy from me if you eat yourself sick."

"I'm not looking for sympathy. I'm looking for fish. Fish is brain food, you know. Emma, why don't you eat fish?"

"For the very good reason that I don't need it," answered Miss Dean amid laughter.

Stacy ran out of bait and asked for more, but his companions refused to let him have any. This, however, did not disturb the fisherman. He cut up a trout and used small pieces of it to bait his hook.

"There is no stopping him," complained Nora.

"Not until he is so full that he can't wiggle. I know how it is. I have been blessed with a fair to middling appetite all my life," said Hippy.

The fat boy still caught trout and ate on undisturbed, but there soon came a time when Nature rebelled and Stacy rolled over on his back and lay gazing up at the white drifting clouds.

"He has finished. I thank the kind fates for that," declared Elfreda in a relieved tone.

"Helpless," nodded Tom.

"Don't be too positive about that. You folks do not yet know that boy's capacity," averred Emma.

"You think so, eh? You think I have eaten until I can hardly roll over?" demanded Stacy.

"I reckon I'm not quite the glutton you try to make me out. I'm not. I've just been making a monkey out of you folks. Here's more than

half the fish I caught and cooked, hidden under my coat. Now, smarties, what have you got to say?"

The Overland Riders looked at each other, then burst into peals of laughter.

"I now move that we go over to the Thumb Lunch Station and get some real food," finished Chunky, getting up and winding the line neatly on the end of his fishing pole.

## CHAPTER XX

## WONDERS OF THE GRAND CANYON

**S**TACY was the only member of the Overland party who cared to eat when they reached the lunch station. Some of the girls took tea, but merely sipped it as they watched the fat boy eat a hearty meal.

Camp was made that night near the station, and on the following morning they rode away over the Government road around the shore of the West Arm, after which they were to make a detour to reach the lake again at Bridge Bay. From there it was but a short journey to the Lake Hotel.

"Jim, when do the stages come through?" called Lieutenant Wingate after the outfit had gotten well under way.

"We'll meet one to-day," replied the guide. "Others will be along to-morrow, and the day after, too, I reckon, but we may not see any after we git past the Lake Hotel, 'cause we might strike off from the trail there. I haven't decided 'bout that yet."



"The rougher they come the better we like it," chuckled Hippy.

"May we catch fish where we're going?" asked Stacy eagerly. "Cook and catch fish?"

"You mean catch and cook, don't you?" reminded Nora.

"Either way so long as we get the fish inside of us," averred Stacy. "I don't care whether you cook them before you catch them, or catch them before you cook them, or whether you eat them before doing either. It's the fish, not the —"

"Do you know," interjected Emma, "I don't believe there is anything in the brain-food theory?"

The Overlanders saw the point and laughed heartily, and Stacy regarded Emma narrowly. They did not stop at the Lake Hotel, but continued on and camped near the base of Elephant Back Mountain.

That evening Tom Gray gave them a talk on the Yellowstone Lake. He said the lake was about a mile and a half above the level of the sea, having an area of one hundred and thirty-nine square miles, the average depth being thirty feet, although in places it was said to be three hundred feet deep.

"Yes, few lakes in the world surpass it in either area, altitude or beauty," added Tom

Gray. "Where else will you find ice-cold water on the one hand and boiling hot on the other, both easily reached by the stretching out of the hands at one and the same time?"

"I know," cried Stacy. "Ask me something harder."

"Well, where, Mr. Smarty?" demanded Nora.

Stacy confessed that he didn't know, but that he was certain he could think of a place if he were to ponder long enough.

"Don't try it," warned Emma. "For your information, Stacy Brown, outside the kitchen stove in winter time you will find the ice water, and the boiling water inside," Emma informed him amid peals of laughter.

At this juncture, Hippy rose to make a speech.

"We find ourselves amid scenes of almost overpowering beauty," he began.

"Present company excepted," muttered Stacy.

"Mountains tower thousands of feet above the surface of the lake, the latter being fed almost wholly by the springs and snows of the — of the Absaroka Range, the mountains forming a picturesque background to the shores of the lake, and — and —" Hippy's voice died away.

"Permit me to help you out, Hippy," offered Emma sweetly. "What you would say, had you not forgotten the piece you committed to memory from the guide book, is, Nature has lavished

her most extraordinary gifts on the region of the Yellowstone. Here are wild woodland, carpeted with varicolored flowers, crystal rivers, thundering cataracts, gorgeous canyons, sparkling cascades, birds and animals; but of all its wonders none is so unusual, so startling, so weird, as the spouting geysers, especially the one that wears Captain Gray's pajamas and Stacy Brown's shirt," finished Emma in a gale of laughter from her companions.

That night the water in their cooking utensils froze, and the Overlanders rose in the morning chilled to the marrow. A brisk run up and down, while Jim was building the fire, restored their circulation and their spirits.

"Our altitude above sea level is seven thousand, seven hundred and thirty-eight feet," announced Tom Gray. "No wonder the water froze last night."

Their route, from that point on, lay along the west bank of the Yellowstone River on their way to the Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone. They started out early in the morning, and by sunrise were well on their way. On their right the guide pointed out the profile of the Sleeping Giant on a high mountain range, the features being coated with snow.

"It's a wonder he doesn't freeze his face," commented Stacy.

"Perhaps he would were it as soft as some persons," suggested Emma demurely.

"Ouch!" cried Stacy. "That one went home."

"Yes, the place where you ought to be," added Nora.

"Home is all right when a fellow hasn't any other place to go to. Of course home is the place for girls because all they can do is to chatter and try to look pretty," retorted Chunky.

The journey was made without incident, unless the perpetual cloud of dust could be called an incident. Dust seems a necessary part of Government roads in the Yellowstone, and the Overland Riders were covered with it ere they had proceeded far on their way.

When within a mile or so of the Canyon Hotel, the murmur of rushing waters was borne to their ears. It was a welcome sound, and the guide informed them that it was the Yellowstone Rapids that they heard. The river, which up to that time had flowed along peacefully, was now forced close up to the Government road by the canyon walls. Mountainous boulders obstructed its passage, the waters plunging wildly between steep banks and over rocks, breaking into boisterous waterfalls and hurling the spray high in the air. Stacy said it reminded him of a blizzard in Chillicothe.



Camp was made without taking a look at the canyon. After a day of hard riding, dust and discomfort, they had little desire for scenery, and further, it was decided to have their first look at this wonder of nature in the early morning.

That first view was taken from Grand Point just as the sun was rising over the mountains, a view that drew exclamations of wonder from each pair of lips. The canyon, though not so vast as the Grand Canyon of the Colorado, was different. This one wound in and out for more than twenty miles, being about two thousand feet broad at the top and some two hundred feet at the bottom.

"Stupendous!" breathed Elfreda Briggs as they strolled out on Lookout Point, a great projection of rock overhanging the canyon. Here the Overlanders gazed in wonder from the painted walls, for which the canyon is famed, to the snowy waterfalls and river, the latter tracing its way like a slender ribbon of silver set amid all the colors of the rainbow.

"It is awesome!" breathed Grace Harlowe. "The little shower that has just passed, has varnished the rocks and brought out the colors with splendid effect."

The rush and roar of the lower falls, half a mile distant, could be plainly heard, and the mist that rose from them drifted slowly up into the air, where it was caught by the rays of the morning

sun, forming an exquisite rainbow that brought murmurs of wonder from the entranced Overland Riders.

"This is known as Moran Point," announced the guide after they had moved to another promontory from which to view the splendid scenery.

"Oh, yes," nodded Tom. "It must have been here that Thomas Moran painted the sketches for his great Yellowstone picture now in the capitol at Washington. The statement is attributed to Moran that fully a million tints and shades of color are represented here."

"I can well believe it," nodded Grace.

"I think I should like to have a nice big pot of each one of those colors," spoke up Stacy. "At a dollar per I'd have some money, wouldn't I?"

"I do not think you would. Before you could sell it you would fall somewhere and spill it all," retorted Emma.

At the guide's suggestion they followed the road along the edge of the canyon, finding many things to interest them, things that, while small in comparison with the canyon itself, were well worth their attention. Through the rustling pines they caught a glimpse of Castle Rock, rising nearly two thousand feet above the valley, and right among the pines that had grown up about it they came upon an enormous block of

granite, weighing, Tom Gray estimated, fully a thousand tons.

"Is there any other granite like that in these parts?" he asked.

"No," answered Badger. "It's the only granite I know of within a hundred miles of here. They call this block the 'Devil's Watch Charm.'"

"I suppose the great question is, 'Where did it come from?'" suggested Miss Briggs.

"Yes. It undoubtedly was transported here in the Glacial Age, and possibly was rolled and hurled hundreds of miles, grinding its way amid the ice of that remote age," said Tom.

"Br-r-r!" shivered Stacy. "Had I lived then I should have had cold feet all the time."

"Again, why the past tense?" questioned Emma.

Stacy grumbled, but had nothing to say, and by now the party was turning back towards camp. On their way they met a coach with a party of tourists from the Canyon Hotel in charge of the proprietor. The latter, so the Overlanders were informed, was about to make his daily trip to the bottom of the canyon, as he expressed it, "for a little exercise and to take the stiffness out of my joints."

The canyon bottom lay a thousand feet below them at that point, Grand View, and the sides of the canyon were steep and rugged.

“What? Are you going down there?” ejaculated Elfreda.

“Yes. I do it nearly every day. Wish to come with me?”

“In order to break my neck? Oh, no,” replied the young lawyer.

The hotel man laughed as he turned and leaped out over the precipice and landed lightly on a narrow ledge of rock. Scarcely pausing to regain his balance, he sprang to another rock and on from rock to rock with the skill of a mountain goat until he reached the bottom.

Emma Dean had watched this feat intently, face flushed and eyes bright.

“No, you’ll not do as he’s done, Emma,” chortled Stacy. “You’re a ’fraid-cat and don’t dare do what we men do.” With the words Stacy took a running start and leaped for the ledge on which the hotel man had first landed. Stacy tottered, but before losing his balance entirely he sprang for the next rock, and so saved himself from a plunge into the abyss.

While the Overlanders and the hotel guests were still gasping they were startled again by seeing Emma leap from the top and go lightly from rock to rock as she made the perilous descent to the bottom of the gorge.

Hippy had run forward with the evident intention of following the reckless pair, even if



he could not prevent the foolish act; but Tom put his hand on the lieutenant's arm.

"No use, Hippy. They'll either reach the bottom safely or— Well, in that case, you would not be in time to prevent the accident."

The hotel guests, with a less personal interest in the outcome, watched the pair with fascination. Emma, light, graceful, and sure-footed, reached the bottom and turned to wave her hand to those above. But poor clumsy Chunky jumped and rolled and stumbled, and when he finally reached the floor of the gorge, though alive and not seriously hurt, was torn and disheveled and scratched, with blood oozing from superficial cuts.

Emma eyed the boy a moment, then broke into gales of laughter. The hotel man, being a kindly soul, tried to suppress his amusement. But Emma's laugh was irresistible, together with the boy's woe-begone appearance, and he finally laughed unrestrainedly.

"I got here, didn't I? What's so funny about that?" blustered Chunky.

"Anyway, you're not a 'fraid-cat—any more than I am. But, oh, how you look!" and again Emma laughed.

"How do we get out of here?" asked Stacy, largely to change the subject.

"You climb and clamber out, young man."

Stacy turned fiercely to the hotel man.

"Do you mean that I've got to scramble up over those rocks to the top? It can't be done!"

"It has been done over and over. It has to be done unless you wish to spend the rest of your life down here."

Stacy groaned and Emma said:

"I don't like the idea any too well myself. But what has to be, has to be. Come, little boy, let's start."

It was a difficult climb, and Emma was red in the face and panting when she finally rejoined her friends. When Stacy appeared three quarters of an hour later he looked so battered that some of the spectators were sorry for him, some alarmed, even though he did look funny as he struggled to strut up to the Overland group as though nothing had happened. But when one girl remarked mockingly, the while she laughed, "Isn't he the funny child?" the rest, in spite of themselves, joined the laughter.

"Perhaps you folks think I'm some kind of joke or a baby or—or—"

"A brainless person," suggested Emma.

"I'm a man," went on the boy brazenly.

"I'm a lion tamer! I can—"

Exclamations and screams interrupted this harangue.

"A bear with cubs, and something or somebody's disturbed her!" shouted some one. "Run, everybody! She's angry!"

Everybody did run, Stacy Brown, the "lion tamer," in the fore, toward the coach that had brought the hotel guests to the spot, into which most of them climbed in haste.

The bear paused, then, as the menace to her cubs seemed less imminent, turned and led them back toward the woods. Seeing this, Stacy Brown bounced out of the coach and took after the retreating bear.

"Stacy!" called Hippy angrily. "Come back!"

"Watch me catch a bear first!"

But Chunky did not catch the bear. Again aroused by what seemed danger to her cubs, the mother bear turned and charged the oncoming boy. Her paw flashed through the air, and the boy was sent rolling into the road.

Before a further onset by the angry animal, Tom threw a stone with sure aim, which struck the beast on her nose. She whirled, and, seeing her cubs, again set out for the woods.

"Alors! Let's go!" urged J. Elfreda Briggs.

"Yes, let's get Stacy away before he kills himself or makes fools out of us all," grumbled Hippy.

## CHAPTER XXI

## CONCLUSION

“LET’S go to the hotel to the dance to-night,” suggested Nora, after their supper.

“I’d like nothing better,” replied Grace.

“Some one had better stay behind to put little Chunky to bed,” sniffed Emma.

“I guess I’m going to that dance!” snorted the fat boy belligerently, but when the others laughed he grinned a bit too.

In the end they all went except Lieutenant Wingate, who had business letters to write. He wrote steadily for half an hour, then paused in his work to consider some question further. As he sat there a sharp whistle attracted his attention.

“That’s a signal,” he thought.

When the whistle came a second time Hippy answered it in kind, then crept silently over a rise of ground toward the sound.

“What’s the matter? They watchin’ you?” came a voice so close and unexpected that



Hippy had hard work to suppress an exclamation.

"Yes," he said after a brief silence, during which he drew back a little. "How are things?"

"They're fixed. They— Say, who are you?"

Without waiting for a reply, the man turned and ran, disappearing in the darkness. Hippy tried to follow, but it was a hopeless chase.

"Something queer there, but, after all, I don't know that anything is actually wrong," reasoned the young man, and went back to his letter writing.

It was some time later that Jim Badger came into camp, and Hippy looked up to say:

"Some fellow's been prowling about here to-night. He gave a peculiar whistle. Did you hear it?"

"Me? No. Might have been some man from the hotel whistling to his dog."

"Maybe," and again Hippy turned to his work.

In a few moments the same whistle came again. The lieutenant put aside his writing materials quietly and stepped softly out into the darkness. He soon heard two voices, but pitched so low that he could not understand what was said. So Hippy tried to draw closer

to the speakers. Just as he reached a spot where he might have overheard what was being said, he stepped on a stick that broke with a sharp snap. Knowing he could not now avoid discovery, he called:

“That you, Jim?”

“Yes, it’s me and a feller who says he’s lost his way. Ain’t a word of truth in that, though. Now you clear out, you tramp, and keep away from this camp,” the guide went on to his invisible companion. “You’re not going to rob us!”

The fellow hastened away and Jim returned to the camp with Hippy, who remarked:

“It doesn’t seem reasonable that a thief would signal his coming by a whistle, does it, Jim?”

“Thieves ain’t reasonable. But I guess the feller did that to make sure the way was clear.”

“Are you going to be around the camp, Jim?”

“Yes; unless you want me to do something.”

“I would appreciate it if you would take my letters to the hotel so they will get off in the early morning.”

Jim took the letters and left the camp, and soon after this Hippy went himself to the hotel to join the other Overlanders at the dance. The

dance hall was in a building separated from the main hotel, and as Hippy approached this building from the rear of the hotel he halted sharply. He then strode on past two men in the shadow of an ell to the main building. He was sure he knew that voice, even though the words had been spoken almost in a whisper. He entered the ballroom and was soon surrounded by friends.

Among them were Colonel Scott and his party who had arrived that evening by stage. After greeting Hippy warmly the colonel said:

"Mrs. Gray tells me that you are to set out in the morning to go along the canyon. We expect to take that route, starting right after lunch. Perhaps we shall overtake you and see you again."

"I most sincerely hope we may meet," was the cordial reply.

Shortly after this the Overland Riders left the ballroom for their camp, there to pack and make ready for an early morning start. They were to go about eighteen miles further on and pitch their next camp at Mount Washburn.

On their arrival there the next day they located their camp near a river on one side and a dense growth of pines on the other. The place was lonely, and the guide warned them to keep a lookout for wild animals. Their site

was not reached by the Government road generally used by the coaches, but the wagon road that led to it was in good condition.

They prepared and ate lunch, then spent the afternoon fishing, making a good catch. This was well, for just before supper time a Concord coach swung into view, and in a few moments Colonel Scott and his party alighted and were cordially greeted by the campers.

"I'm glad you came just now to help us eat all these fish," said Grace.

"Yes, do stay for supper," urged Elfreda.

"We're a big party to come in unannounced," objected the colonel.

"No; you will only ease our consciences, for you know one ought not to catch more than is needed for food," observed Nora.

The coaching party stayed. It was late when they finally got up to resume their journey. It was when they were about to get into the coach that Jim Badger, a look of surprise and concern on his face, exclaimed:

"Say, you've lost a nut off this hind wheel!"

The guide set off down the road the coach had come to look for the nut. Hippy followed after, taking a lantern as it was growing dark. The lieutenant had gone but a few yards when he saw the nut lying in plain sight.

"We are certainly in luck that you found this



so soon, Lieutenant Wingate," said one of the party, as, the wheel fixed, they were ready to go on again.

"Yes," agreed Hippy slowly.

"I'm hungry," announced Stacy, as soon as the coach was out of sight.

"Hungry!" exclaimed Emma. "Stacy Brown, you ate fish until, in spite of the amount we had, I was afraid it would not go around."

Before Stacy could resent this in words a shrill scream of distress came to the ears of the Overland Riders. This was followed by a volley of shots.

"That coaching party's in trouble!" exclaimed Tom. "Come, fellows! Better stay here, girls."

Grace and Elfreda did not heed Tom's advice, and before long the party of five, all mounted bareback, were off down the road.

"It is the coach," muttered Hippy a little later. "Hi! Cease firing!" he yelled.

"Don't shoot! It's Wingate!" cried a voice.

"What happened?" demanded Tom, when the campers galloped up to the group of tourists huddled at the side of the road.

"Matter?" shouted Colonel Scott. "We've been held up and robbed!"

It was Grace who discovered the rear wheel of the vehicle lying at the side of the road.

"Driver, did that nut come off again?"

The driver looked as if he would not answer the girl's question, but a glance into Tom's eyes made him say:

"Yes. The axle broke when the wheel came off," he added.

Only one masked man had been seen, but the driver insisted that he had noted rifles and revolvers behind the bushes, covering the party.

"Huh!" snorted Elfreda, at which Hippy grinned.

But it was serious business and Hippy soon sobered.

"Come, Tom, let's look for traces of the robbers. The rest of you had better not come. It might confuse the trail."

The two made a thorough search near the spot of the hold-up and came to the conclusion that only two men had been engaged in the work. Soon after this Hippy, peering behind some bushes, picked up something from the ground.

"Well, any results?" asked Colonel Scott when the searchers were back near the coach.

"Nothing positive," answered Hippy. "By the way, Colonel, did you tell your driver to notify the park guards?"

"Yes."

"Well, nothing more can be done to-night.

Your driver had better start back at once to the hotel for another coach. Meanwhile, the rest of you come to our camp for the night."

This was agreed upon and the large party lay down in some fashion in the camp of the Overland Riders to get what sleep they could. Only Hippy sat by the fire, eyes open. Badger tossed restlessly for a long while, then, glancing at the wakeful lieutenant, turned over and slept.

At dawn the coach came rumbling up and was soon followed by four park guards.

Colonel Scott gave the guards a brief account of what had taken place. Meanwhile Hippy went into his tent and returned holding a hat in one hand and a revolver in the other.

"What do you know about this?" demanded a guard sternly, whirling upon Hippy.

"Don't get excited, Buddy; and don't give me orders," drawled the lieutenant. "Look out!" he exclaimed suddenly.

He need not have called out. One of the guards, also seeing Jim Badger turn and try to get away, grabbed the fellow by the collar and held him.

"This hat belongs to Badger," said Hippy. "I picked it up last night near the spot where, I think, you'll find their loot concealed. Is this your watch, Colonel?" he continued, now holding out a handsome watch to the colonel.

"It is! Where did you get it?"

"Same place." This time Hippy did not call out, but jumped toward Taggart, who was running toward the forest. He caught up with the fellow, who stopped, reached out his foot and kicked viciously, landing in Hippy's stomach. Wingate went down, but a guard was not far away and he caught the driver in a viselike grip.

The guide and the driver were taken back to the settlement, and Taggart confessed that he and Badger had been robbing the hotel and coaching parties for a year or two, their work making it fairly easy to do this.

Back in Cinnabar they were met with the news that the car containing their ponies had been broken into and robbed and that the railroad detectives had found no trace of the animals.

"I'm sorry," said Grace. "We'll ship these animals home, as we'll never hear of the missing ponies."

This attended to, the Overland Riders entrained for home.



















